

### From Generation To...

Robert B. Fried

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### **DEDICATION**

To my son, Aaron (Yisroel Kopel): Always remember who you are and to see the good. Your smiles and giggles light up a room and our life.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

To my mother Penina, father Alex, brother Avi, and sister Jennifer, thank you for your love and support throughout my childhood and now into adulthood; life truly is a journey and I am blessed to have you as my family.

To my beautiful wife Rachael, thank you for your everlasting love and support. You are a loving spouse to me and the best mother to our son, Aaron.

To my very special Safta, you have seen us grow from grandchildren, to spouses and parents. Your love and wisdom inspires us each day, to appreciate life and be happy. I am blessed to be your grandson. I am honored to share your story and ensure that it is passed down to the next generation, beginning with your great-grandchildren Alana Paige Fried and Aaron Gabriel Fried.

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### **PREFACE**

When I had written the first edition of this book in 2013, little did I know that additional chapters would be added in my journey to document my grandparents' lives and stories. At the time I found my bashert, now, my beautiful wife, Rachael. I knew that one day, we could be blessed with our own family. With gratitude to Hashem, we are now parents to a



handsome son, Aaron (Hebrew name: Yisroel Kopel ben Chaim Ber, after my paternal grandfather, Israel Fried (Yisroel Kopel ben Matisyahu). As a grandson of four Holocaust survivors and now a father, it is my responsibility to keep the flame alive for the next generation. What future generations will read will be via textbooks, and what they will hear will be via audio recordings. The reality is that many survivors of the Holocaust are now in their 70's and older. It is becoming more difficult to document their lives and stories. Be it for health reasons or because of the painful memories, many survivors cannot tell their stories. It is for this reason that books such as <a href="From Generation To...">From Generation To...</a> need to be written. By doing so, we are giving a voice to all those who suffered, while educating the future. My hope is that the next generation, our children, will encourage a world of peace, love and harmony for generations to come.

Robert B. Fried – May 2017

Please follow *From Generation To...* online for additional information and resources:

Web: http://www.fromgenerationto.com

http://www.holocaustpoems.com

http://www.holocaustremembranceday.com

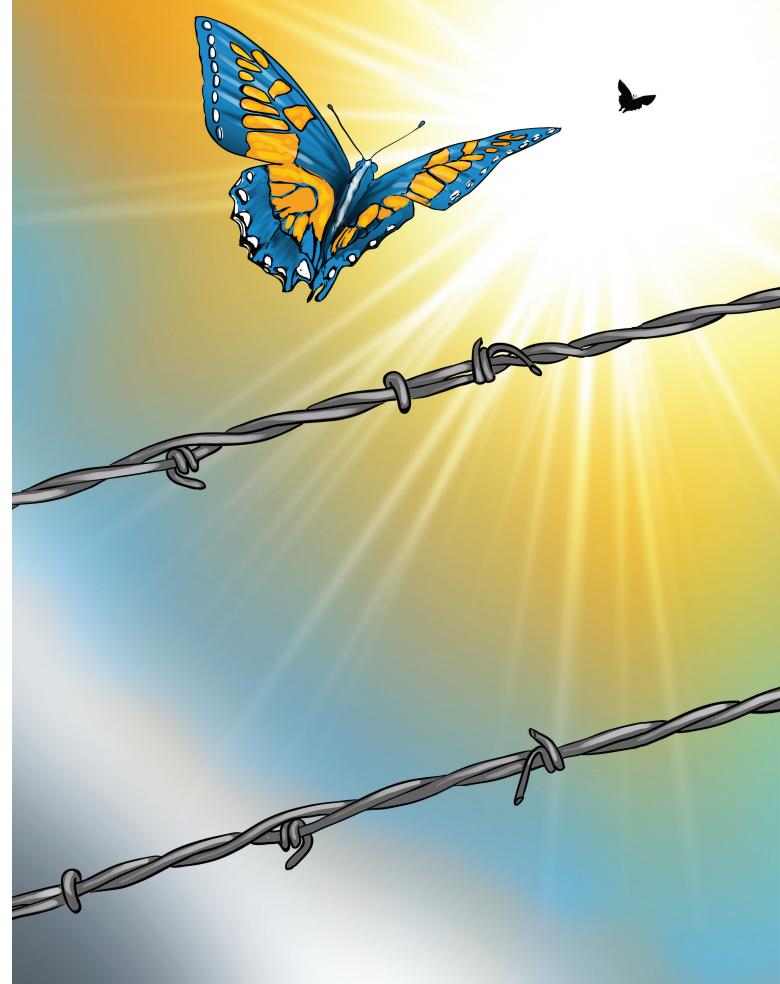
http://www.internationalholocaustremembranceday.com

f https://www.facebook.com/FromGenerationTo

https://twitter.com/fromgento

## A Message from the Illustrator

It has been a privilege for me to illustrate this book of poetry for Robert Fried and his family. This is not a book about tragedy, but more a book about optimism. Told through the heart felt poetry of a boy, this is a book about triumph over adversity. Robert's family, along with countless other families suffered so much, but those who survived were strong enough to pick themselves up and make a life for themselves, finding joy in the love of their family, and inspiring future generations with their strength. That boy is now a husband and father who has devoted much of his life to finding out what happened to his family during the holocaust, and to record what he has found for future generations to learn from. I hope my artwork helps to bring the story to life. Robert's poetry reflects such a range of emotions. People of all ages need to be able to read this and to understand what this generation experienced, and to never forget the strength of character that got them through.





The sound of the violin is what all of us hear.

For the time being, it takes away all of our worries and all of our fear.

However, the sounds we hear tonight are very rare.

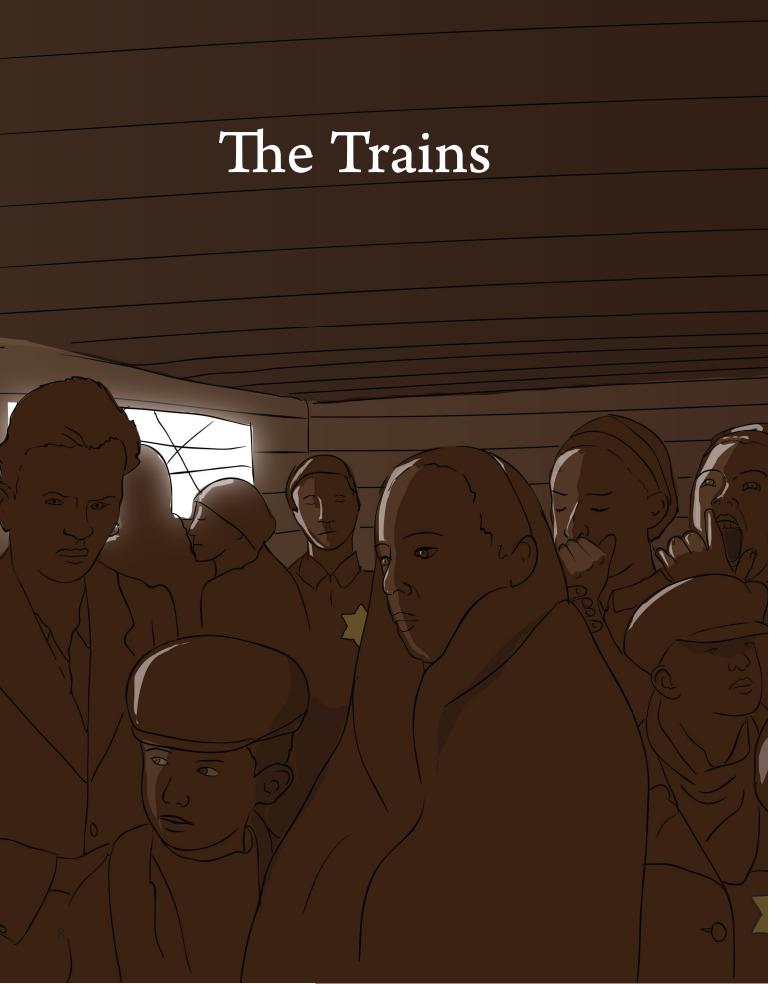
Only occasionally do we hear the sound of music in the air.

# The Sound of Music in the Ghetto









We are crowded and cannot catch a breath of fresh air.

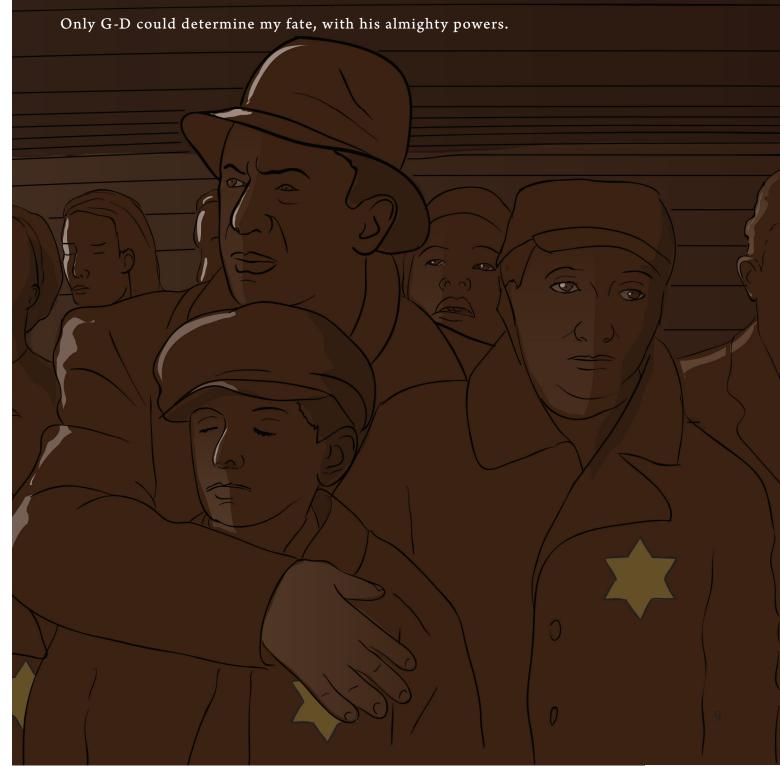
They would not help us; they don't care.

Standing for hours at a time, without any water, or in Hebrew, mayim.

We are starving and literally dying for a meal.

Tell us, could this be happening? Could this inhumanity be real?

I don't know where or how I am going to end up in the next couple of hours.



# The Gas Chambers

It was cold, and chills were going down their spines.

They all stood in orderly lines.

The guards told them they would have to disrobe and take a shower.

Each minute that passed, seemed like an hour.

They were surely scared and tired.

Escape they would not because the camp gates were barb wired.

They had to keep quiet and face what was ahead.

They thought to themselves, after today, would I be alive or would I be dead?

The guards let them in and put on the water and music.

People started coughing, as if they were sick.

They began to scream and cry when they realized they were being gassed.

Many then knew they would eventually die, as the time passed.

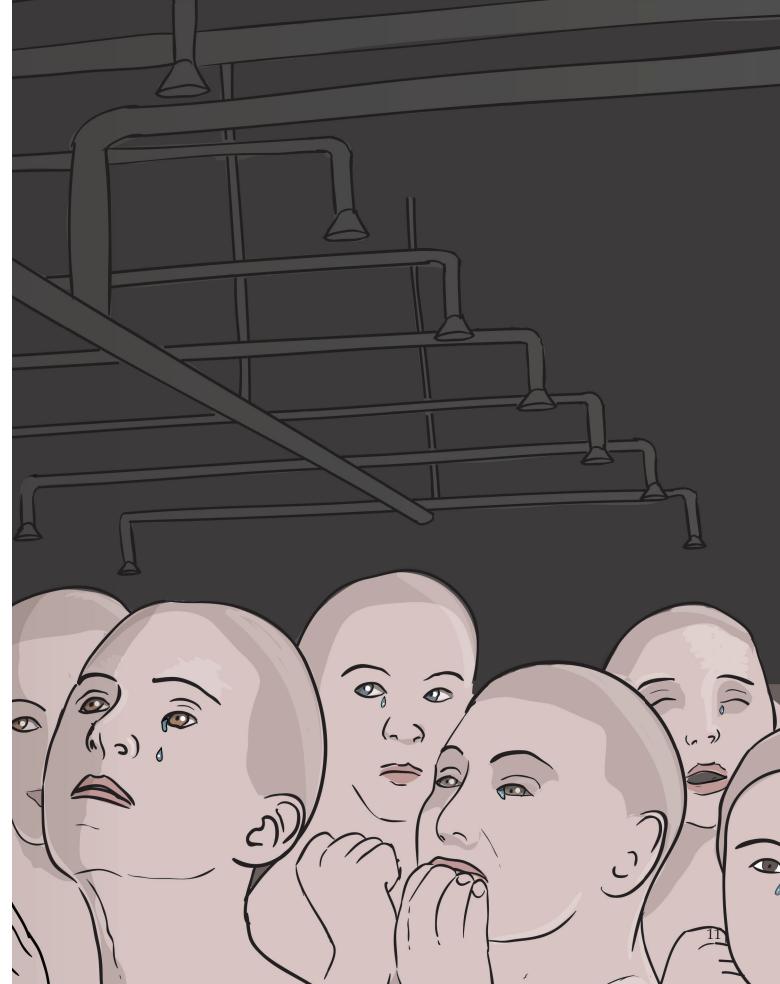
After five minutes the room was filled with dead bodies lying on the ground.

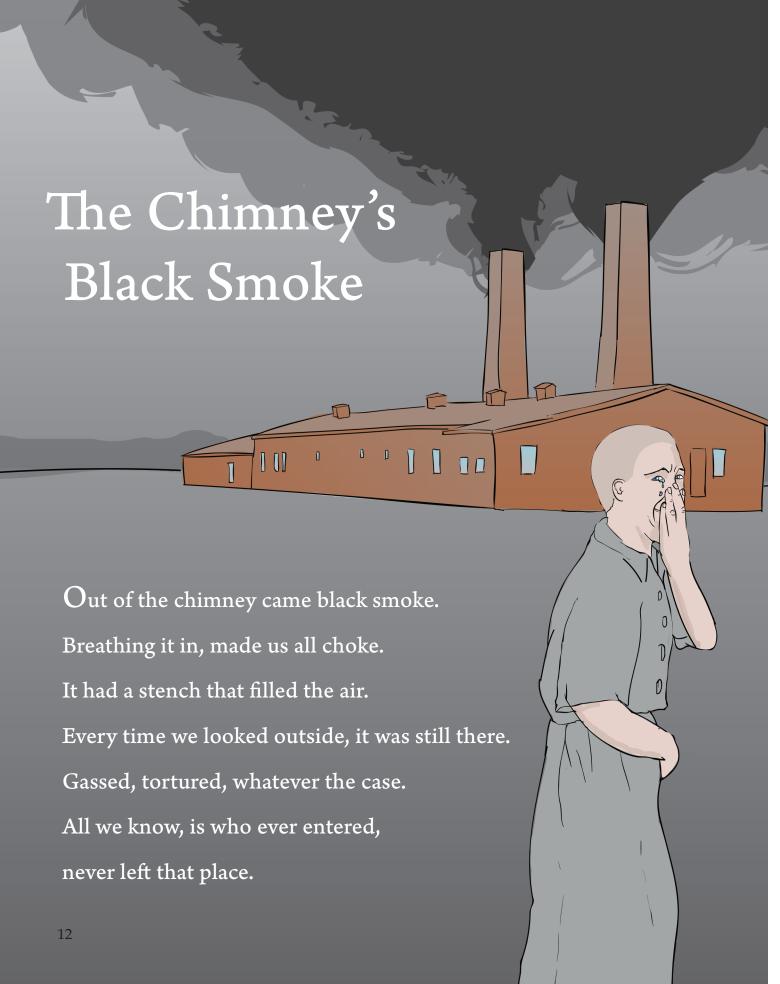
The room was completely silent; there was not one sound.

The guards returned to clean up the bodies for the next group to be sent in.

Later on, the same process would again begin.









# The Camps

The conditions in which we lived were poor.

Many people were sick, and garbage was all over the floor.

We suffered from malnutrition because we could not eat.

Our bodies, aching, because we were severely beat.

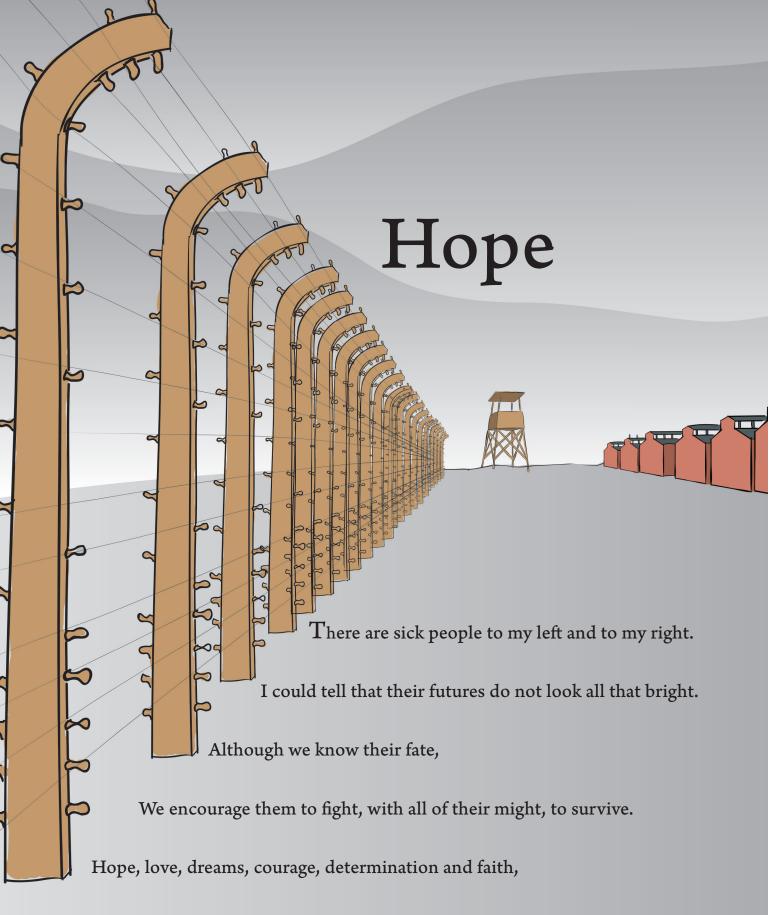
Lying down in my bed,

not knowing if the person next to me was alive or dead.

In this bed in which I now lay,

I pray to G-D to allow all of us to live another day.





Are the only things that could help keep people alive.



# Strength and Determination

I lost my family.

I lost my friends.

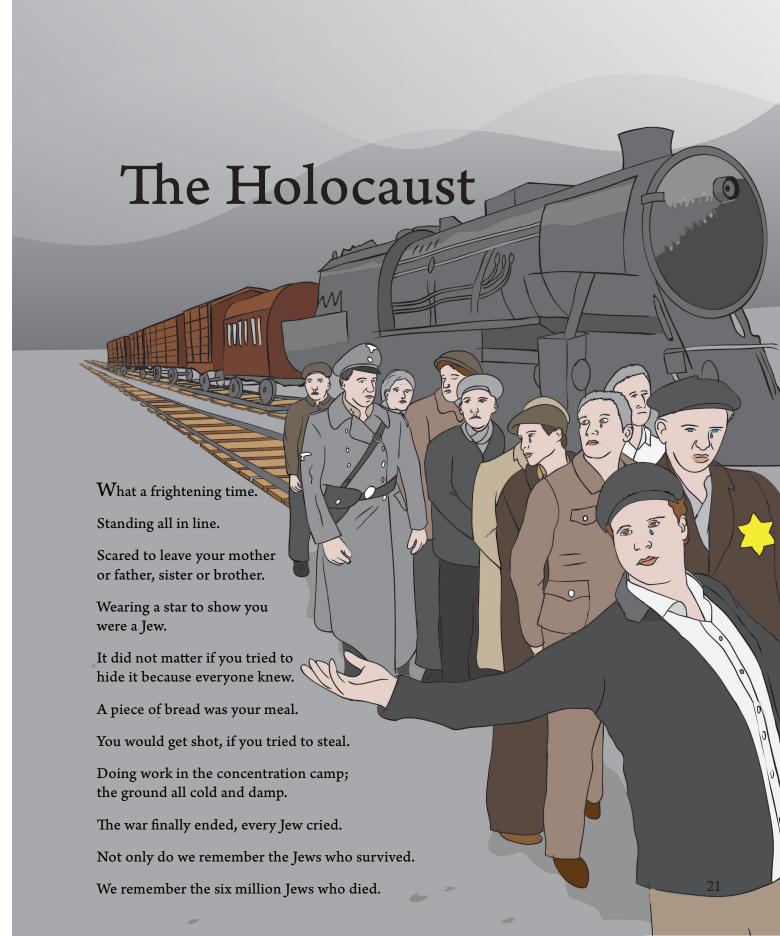
Everything I once owned, is now gone.

I still do not know how I have

the strength and determination to go on.







# My Memories

My memories have faded with the years.

Every time I try to remember, my eyes are filled with tears.

Thinking about the suffering and the pain that I went through.

Because of my faith - I am a Jew.



### Dedicated to Those Who Wanted to Know



People often ask me, why do I write? Why do I care?

Why does it matter, if you were not even there?

Once there was a country that was so much in need.

Many were unemployed, poor, and many could not even read.

However, one day, there came a man who changed everyone's mind.

He told them to look towards the future, not behind.

"I will make a better life for you."

"This trouble we are experiencing, blame it on the Jew."

People found hope in what he said.

Now people wanted every Jew that was alive, dead.

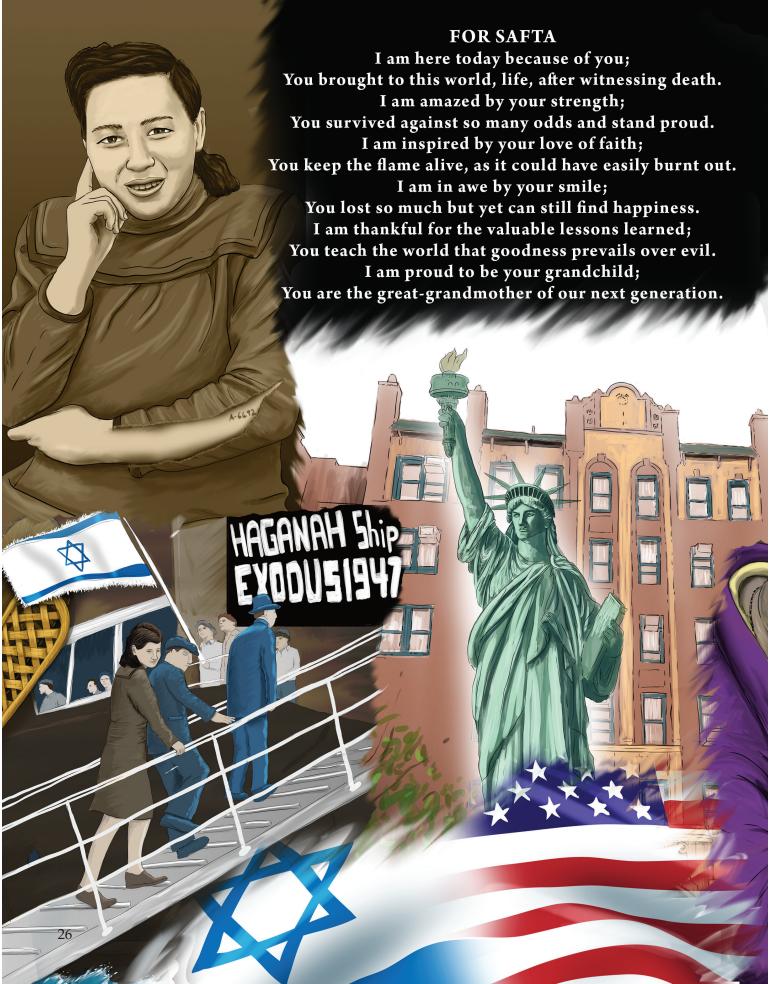
How can a country blame all of its problems on just a few?

I wish I knew.

You cannot murder a person because of their cultural background or race.

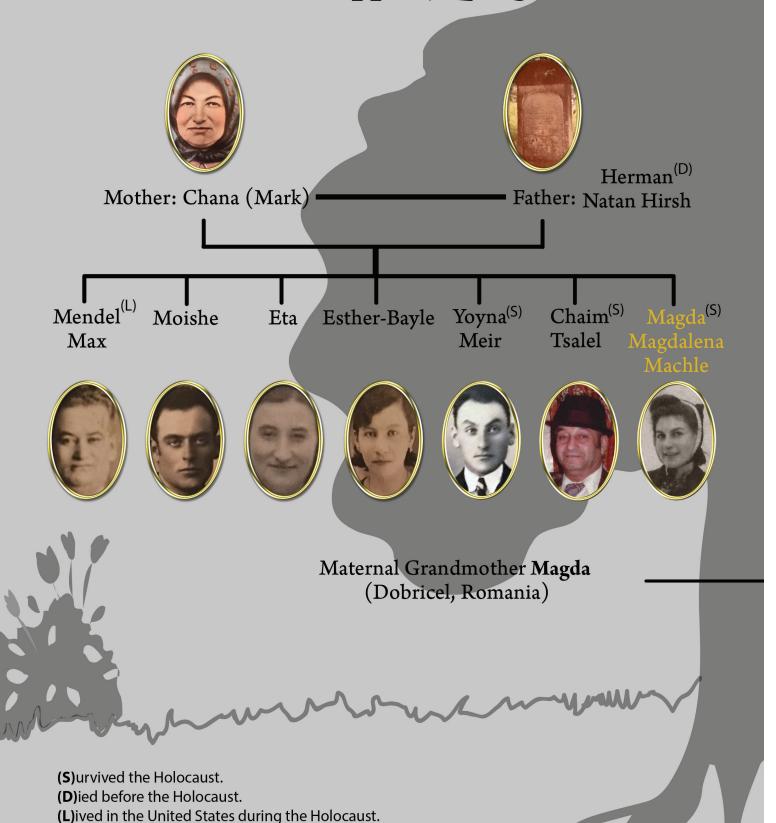
That is why I write these poems; so atrocities like this, will never again take place.



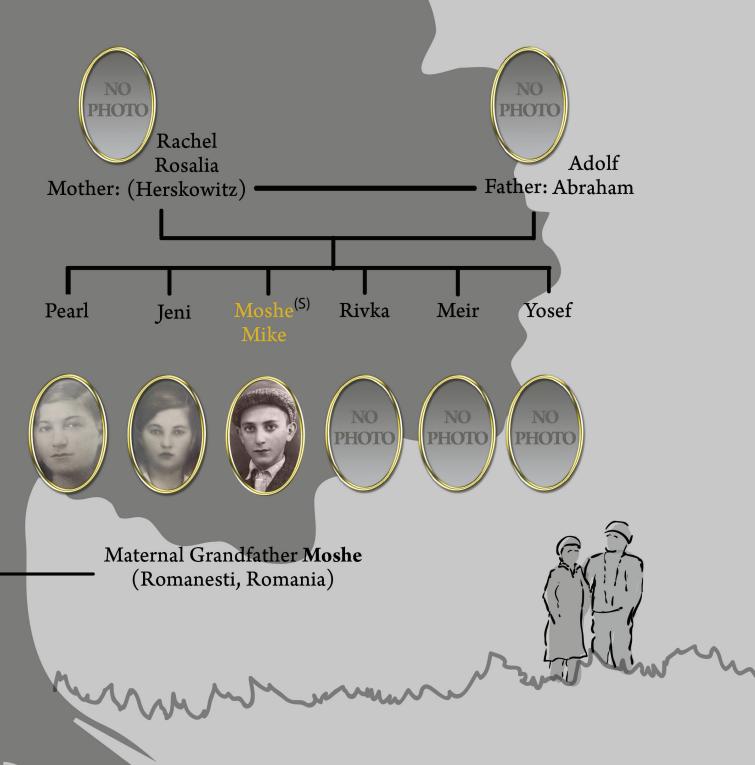




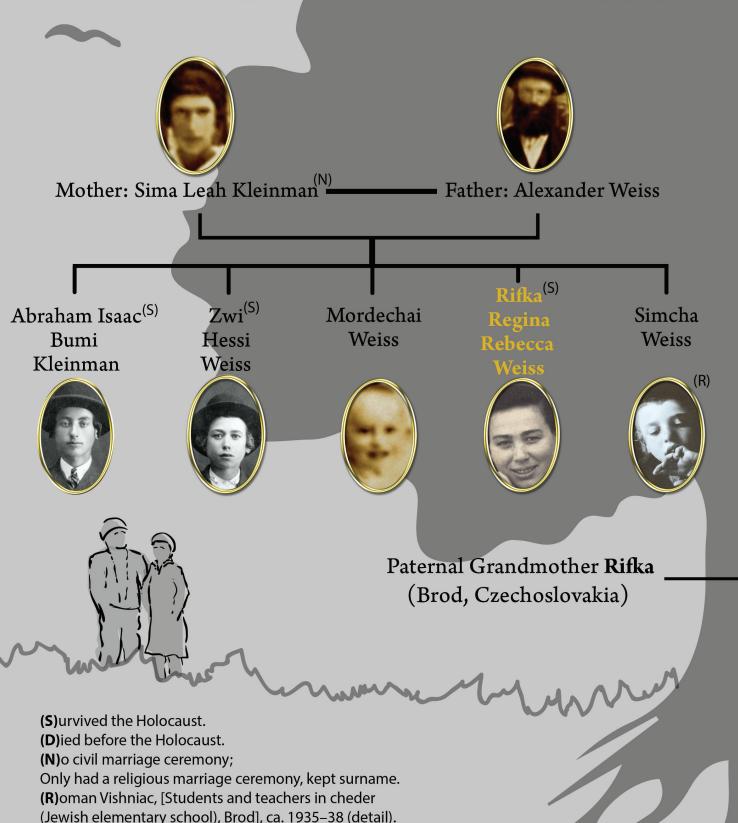
# Berkovits



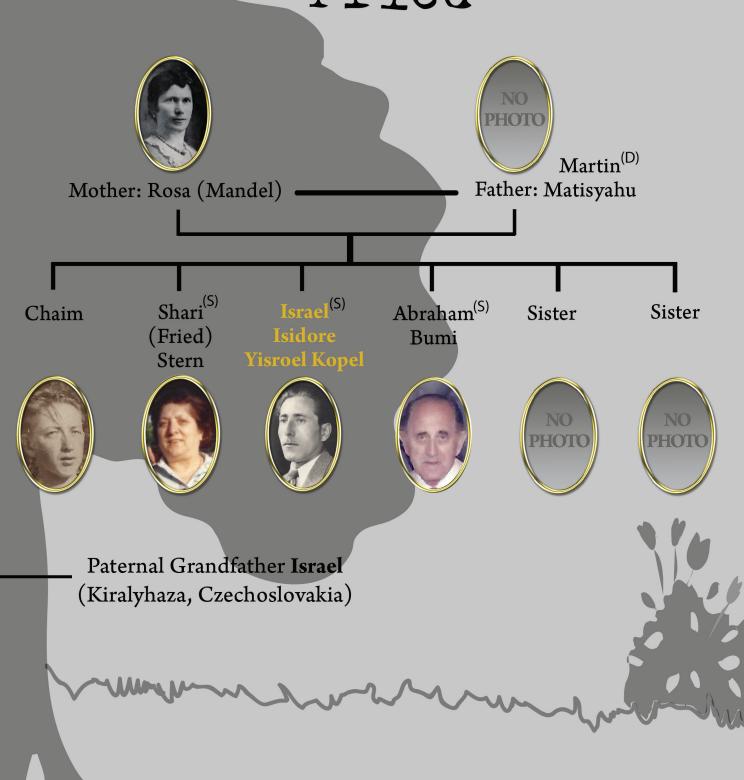
# Herskowitz



## Kleinman - Weiss



## Fried



## WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHS





The wedding of my maternal grandparents: Magdalena (Berkovits)
Herskowitz (June 18, 1924 – March 29, 2003) and Moshe Herskowitz (June 29, 1922 – May 08, 2008) on August 13, 1945.



The wedding of my paternal grandparents: Rifka (Weiss) Fried (May 01, 1928 - ) and Israel Fried (July 08, 1918 – April 21, 1997) on March 14, 1950.

## **OUR FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS**

Many of my relatives had their lives cut short. They were mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers who were ripped apart from their families. Unfortunately, not everyone has a photograph and in some cases, we cannot recall their name. However, their memory will live on and they will always have a place in our family's history and our hearts. May his or her memory be a blessing.

## Magdalena (Berkovits) Herskowitz: Babi



Babi at age 16 (back of photo dated: February 04, 1941). This photo was found in the garbage after returning home from the camps.



Babi (right) with her friend, Bella (left). They were very good friends. Bella had eventually immigrated to Israel.



Babi's mother, Chana (Mark) Berkovits. Babi's mother had owned a grocery store, located in a room of the family's home. Babi's parents were very religious and did not take photographs. This photo was taken at the request of her sons. Babi's mother had died at 65 years old, while in Auschwitz. This photo was found in the garbage after returning home from the camps.





Photos of Babi in Romania, at the gravesite of her father, Natan Hirsh. He had died in 1925 or 1926 of a heart attack, when Babi was only 1½ years old. His grave is located within the Dobricel Jewish Cemetery, on top of a hill. Babi's parents were very religious and did not take photographs.



Babi's eldest brother, Mendel / Max with his wife Rifka and sons Herman (left) and Martin (right). Max had immigrated to the United States when he was 18; he was in the United States during the Holocaust.



Babi's brother, Moishe and his wife. This photo was taken about 20 years before the Holocaust. They were a wealthy couple. While in the ghetto, Moishe and his wife were beaten so badly that he could not talk and no longer had the will to pray or live. This photo was found in the garbage after returning home from the camps.



Babi's sister, Eta and her son Zwi. Eta's husband had survived the camps and re-married.



Babi's sister, Esther-Bayle and her fiancé. This photo was found in the garbage after returning home from the camps.



Babi's brothers, Moishe (top left) and Yoyna / Meir (top right). Babi's sister, Eta (bottom right) with her husband Josef (bottom center) and his sister Chana (bottom left). Yoyna / Meir had survived the Holocaust and eventually immigrated to Israel. This photo was found in the garbage after returning home from the camps.



Babi's brother, Chaim / Tsalel at my bris in 1978. My aunt, Hanna (Herskowitz) Gal, is tending to me. He had survived the Holocaust and eventually immigrated to the United States and lived in New York.

## **Moshe Herskowitz: Zaide**



A portrait of Zaide from 1936, at age 14, in Dej, Romania. He was learning to be a baker at the time. This photo was found in the garbage after returning home from the camps.



Zaide (left) at age 18, with a friend, Adolf (right). This photo was found in the garbage after returning home from the camps.





Photos of Zaide from 1950, shortly after he became a policeman at Haifa Port, Israel. He was a policeman for 7 years; prior to becoming a policeman, he served in the Israeli Army for 1 year (1948).



Zaide with his sisters, Jeni (left) born in 1920 and Pearl (right) born in 1916. These were separate photos that were found in the garbage after returning home from the camps. Years later (Zaide is older in the photo), he had combined these photos into one as a memory of his sisters. None of Zaide's immediate family members had survived the Holocaust; these photographs are the only ones he had of his family members.

## Rifka (Weiss) Fried: Safta



A portrait of Safta from 1946 or 1947; taken in Holzhausen, Germany. The dress she is wearing was made from a blanket.



A portrait of Safta's family before the Holocaust, obtained from her aunt Gitel (her mother's sister) who lived in the United States. Safta and her youngest brother, Simcha Weiss, are not in the portrait. Simcha was photographed in the 1930s by the famous photographer, Roman Vishniac; that photo of Simcha can be viewed within the Chapter, "Putting a Name to His Photographs".

Safta remembers her father, Alexander Weiss, as a quiet man. He worked as a roofer. Safta's mother, Sima Leah Kleinman, taught Hebrew every Saturday. She died at age 47 in the camps. Safta remembers her having a beautiful singing voice. Safta's brother, Zwi / Hessi Weiss (left) had survived the Holocaust and eventually immigrated to Israel; he is 95 years old and lives in Haifa. Safta's eldest brother, Abraham Isaac / Bumi Kleinman (right) had survived the Holocaust and eventually immigrated to the United States and lived in New York. Safta's brother Mordechai (baby) had died within weeks of the camps being liberated.

#### Note:

The Hebrew Calendar day, 28th of Iyyar (Yom Yerushalayim), marks the yahrzeit (anniversary of the death) of Safta's mother, Sima Leah (bas Avrohom) Kleinman, Safta's father, Alexander (ben Zwi Aryeh) Weiss, and brothers, Mordechai Weiss and Simcha Weiss.

Safta's mother had 2 sisters and 1 brother: Gitel, Sarah Rochel and Moshe. Abraham Isaac was born in 1918, during World War I. Alexander and Sima Leah only had a Jewish marriage ceremony (not a civil marriage ceremony). Sima Leah kept her maiden name, Kleinman, and Abraham Isaac took the name, Kleinman.



Safta's eldest brothers, Abraham Isaac / Bumi Kleinman (left) and Zwi / Hessi Weiss (right) before the Holocaust. Safta obtained this portrait from her aunt Gitel.

## **Israel Fried: Saba**



A portrait of Saba.



Saba (seated on the ground, first man on the right) was a Hungarian soldier and a sharp shooter.



Saba's mother, Rosa (Mandel) Fried.

### Note:

Saba's father, Martin / Matisyahu had died in 1928 at age 40, when Saba was 10 years old. At the time of his father's passing, Saba was at the synagogue praying; he was approached by someone there and was told to return home right away.



Saba (right) boxing with his eldest brother, Chaim (left).



Saba's sister Shari (Fried) Stern. She had survived the Holocaust and eventually immigrated to Hungary and lived in Budapest.



Saba's brother, Abraham / Bumi lighting a candle for my Bar Mitzvah cake with his wife, Lea. Abraham / Bumi had survived the Holocaust and eventually immigrated to the United States and lived in New York.

### MY BABI AND SAFTA

## Magdalena (Berkovits) Herkowitz: Babi

In 1994, with a cassette recorder in hand, my mother and I sat down to listen and record Babi's story in her own words; in her own voice. I remember that like it was yesterday. She told her story and although I didn't understand all the words, I witnessed first-hand, her emotions.

The cassette tape containing the recording had gone missing for many years and thankfully resurfaced in 2016. Twenty-two years later, I replayed the cassette tape and it seemed to be in bad condition; to ensure that I could preserve her story, I decided to make a digital copy using my iPhone. I am very happy that I did because the tape began to tear shortly after. I had digitized the audio recording just in time!

I wanted to go a step further and have the tape translated. A search online led me to this wonderful husband and wife team from Israel. They had translated Babi's story into English text and then the wife had re-recorded the audio in English.

#### Note:

Babi's story and the associated audio recording are accessible via the Oral History Collection of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C.: Oral history interview with Magda Herskowitz (RG Number: RG-50.940\*0001, Accession Number: 2016.230.1, Date: January 22, 1994).

Here is Babi's story, as she told it to my mother and I that day:

## The Story of My Life

My name is Magda Herskowitz, born Berkovits. I was born on June 18, 1924, in a small village in Transylvania. The name of the village is Dobricel. We were seven children, three sisters and four brothers. My father died when I was one and a half years old. I did not know him. My mother's name was Chana, my father's name was Herman Berkovits. My brothers' names were: Mendel, Moishe, Meir and Tsalel. My sisters' names were Esther-Bayle and Eta. My mother and I lived in the village. We had a store and we had land and a mill. My mother had another cousin in the village.

We had a nice life until Hitler came. Then we were taken into the ghetto Dej. where we stayed for four weeks and from there we were taken to Auschwitz. From the Dej ghetto, after two days and two nights in closed wagons of up to fifty people, packed like herring, without air, food and water, we arrived at Auschwitz. There they separated me from my mother and I never saw her again. They separated us from parents, from sisters and led us into the shower; a thousand women. There were two long tables; on both sides of the tables were standing Mengele and Eichmann with SS soldiers. Music was played to distract our minds. We were ordered to undress completely and our hair was shaved, even from the lower part of the body. They took away our belongings and the SS walked among the naked women. After the shower we received clothes, not fit to our sizes. Some were long, some short. I got a dress that was too long, up to the ground. I ripped a piece from the length and made myself a head covering. When we met after the bath we could not recognize each other. We looked like meshugene (crazy ones), with the bare heads. They ordered us into rows of five and led us to the tables of the SS officers. They asked for our names and birth dates. Then they led us to the barracks and warned us not to leave them or the SS man will shoot us. As a toilet, we had a big room with pots, where we did our big and small things. We were 500 women in one room, head on head (crowded). If you wanted to get out you had to step on each other. At night, we slept on the bare floor, without pillows and no bed. Once when I went out a SS screamed at me that I should not get close to the barbed wires; I might get killed. Then I asked him: when will I see my mother? He pointed to the chimneys of the ovens, from which smoke went up, and he said to me: do you see the smoke? There is your mother. I understood they burned her. I returned to the barrack and began crying. From then on, I could not sleep nor eat. I was sent to forced labor. We worked very hard. We got one slice of bread a day and one plate of soup made of bran (what is left after you take the wheat out of it). In Auschwitz, I woke up in the morning and went out to the roll call. We were 1,500 women from 19 to 25 years old. After the roll call we got very little black coffee. A Half an hour later we got shovels and marched out to work. We did work for the German tanks, for the German army. I worked eight hours in snow, in the cold winter, without any food and water. After the eight hours, I returned to the camp and we got a plate of warm bran soup. One day I became very sick; I was forced to go to work and beaten.

Once I saw my good friend standing in the line for soup. She was still

holding her plate. Then came the SS man and hit her on her head with a chair and she died.

Since we had arrived at Auschwitz we did not get our period. We got some powder with the name Brom in our coffee. I had a friend that was married and was pregnant when she was taken to the concentration camp. After a month, she gave birth to a child. But it was winter and the child could not stand the cold and died after 8 days, even though the Uberfuhrer brought the child some clothes, food and milk. In a camp, a child cannot survive.

The soup, made of leaves of beetroots that we were given, was full of sand. I was in Auschwitz another four weeks. One night we were taken out for a roll call, then to the gas chambers - we were told to undress and once again they inspected our naked bodies — who is fit for work and who will go to the gas chambers. After standing there for a whole night we were taken, still naked, to a big place where we received a gray uniform and climbed the coal wagons. 50 in a wagon, we were taken to Riga, where again we were asked for names and birthdates and we were then taken with big trucks to a port with ships. There we had to carry heavy boxes with ammunition to load on the ships. Those who were not able to carry the boxes were beaten. I fell while carrying a box of 50-kilo of ammunition. The SS man hit me with a rifle on my ribs - for a few days I was walking around with terrible pain and crying.

We suffered hunger and cold, my feet froze, I had no shoes. I suffer because of that till today.

After liberation from the Germans I fell into the hands of the Russians. They liberated me and they mocked me. After the liberation, I walked home for three weeks by foot, from Germany to Poland, from Poland to Hungary and to Romania. On the roads, I also suffered hunger and cold. Nobody wanted to let us into their house. I was together with ten girls. We were full of lice. Nobody wanted to let us in. After I arrived home I met my brother Tsalel. Only he was at home. When he looked at me, he could not recognize me; I was like a Muzelman (a walking skeleton). My weight was 65 kilograms. Two weeks after I arrived home I got to know my husband, Moshe Herskowitz, also from a village not far from Dej. After 3 weeks, we married and settled in a little town Retiav. I had a house there and a mill that my older brother Moishe had left. He did not return. He did not come back from the concentration camp. One year after my marriage, I had my first daughter Hanna. When she was one year old we left Romania toward Germany, to a DP (Displaced Persons) camp so that we could then emigrate to Israel. In this camp, we remained one year and then went to Israel. In Israel, we lived in

barracks. My husband was taken to the army and I remained with a little baby, without furniture, windows; with one cooking pot in which to cook and little food. Six weeks after my husband was taken to the army I received 25 Lira (Israeli currency at that time) to buy food. After a year, my husband was released from the army and he became a policeman. The pay was very small. It was very hard to make a living for us.

He was a policeman at night and working during the day at a building site, to earn a few extra Liras. When Hanna was seven years old we decided to have another child, so she will not be alone in the world. I had a very hard pregnancy for nine months. I was very tired. Then another girl, Penina, was born. When Penina was three years old we moved to a moshav (cooperative Israeli settlement) named Yad Natan. There we started a new life, working in agriculture. We also had chicken and cows for milk. We worked very hard. The older daughter went to a boarding school for two years. While there, she decided to learn to be a hairdresser. She became a hairdresser. She got acquainted with a young man that came from America. After a short time, they got married and he took her to America. I along with my husband and the younger daughter remained in Israel. After two years, I missed my daughter very much, so I went there as a tourist with my Penina. We stayed there and in Canada too for two and a half years. My husband worked in a bakery, very hard and earned a little. After two years, I went over to America to my older daughter. She gave birth to a son. I did not return (to Canada). I began working at an elderly citizen's home. After four months, my husband joined me. We worked together for ten years. Then I got sick and left. My husband found work in a bakery. There he got wounded in one hand, due to hard work. He did not return to work and we live now on pension. We live in a two-family house with my older daughter. She has 2 sons. My younger daughter got married at the age of 19 to a sabra (born in Israel too). They have 3 children: 2 boys and 1 girl.

### Rifka (Weiss) Fried: Safta

In 2014, Judith Cohen (Director, Photographic Reference Collection) of the United States Holocaust Museum, had met with Safta to speak about her experiences during the Holocaust and gather a series of family photographs to share with the Museum. The following is a short summary that Judith prepared after the meeting:

Rifka Weiss (now Rebecca Fried) is the daughter of Alexander and Sima Leah (nee Kleinman) Weiss. She was born on May 1, 1928 in a religious home in Brod, Czechoslovakia, where her father was a roofer. Rifka had three older brothers, Abraham Kleinman, Zwi Hersh (Hessi) and Mordechai (b. 1926), and a younger brother Simcha (b. 1932). Simcha appears in a few of Roman Vishniac's iconic photographs of young boys studying in a cheder. Rifka's mother taught Hebrew every Saturday and had a beautiful singing voice. Two of her older brothers studied in the yeshiva in Nitra, and the third studied in a yeshiva 6 km from home. Rifka attended local religious school where she learned Czech. In 1939 Hungary annexed the Transcarpathia region of Czechoslovakia including Brod and later conscripted young men, including Rifka's older brothers, for forced labor. On March 19, 1944, Germany invaded Hungary. The following month, Rifka, her parents and youngest brother were sent to a ghetto in Mukacevo and in May were deported to Auschwitz. Her parents and Simcha were killed immediately. Her mother was just 47 years old. Rifka worked in Auschwitz as a seamstress inserting soles in shoes and shoulder pads in jackets. She also sorted confiscated belongings searching for gold and valuables. Rifka continued this work until no more deportations arrived at the camp. Afterwards, she worked in cabbage fields near Auschwitz. Once, a female SS guard hit her on the hit causing her convulsions. In January 1945, the Germans began to evacuate Auschwitz. Rifka was taken to Bergen-Belsen where she stayed for one week, and in February she went Rochlitz for one week. From there she and other female prisoners, including her cousin Malka Weiss, were sent on a death march to Zatec where she was liberated. Local Czechs cared and fed the women. Rifka learned to cook while working in a hospital in Zatec. Her two surviving older brothers found her in Zatec as she was cooking food for Shabbat. She then learned that her third oldest brother Mordechai had died in 1944 at the age of 18. She and Malka remained in Czechoslovakia for a year living in a kibbutz hachshara. Afterwards, Rifka

joined a kibbutz in a convent in Holzhausen, Germany. The nuns helped care for the young survivors. Rifka worked in the camp kitchen. In July 1947, she made her way to France and boarded the Exodus to sail to Palestine. The British would not allow the passengers to land in Haifa and sent them back to Europe. Rifka eventually arrived in Israel in 1948. There she met and married Israel Fried (b. July 8, 1918), a survivor from Kiralyhaza. In 1959, they moved to the United States with their two sons, Alexander (Alex) and Matthew (Maty). Years later both sons married and had families of their own. Saba and Safta were blessed with five grandchildren.



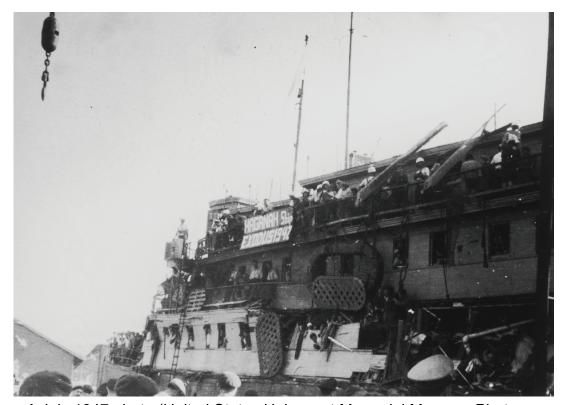
A special photograph with Babi (left) and Safta (right), on the day of my Bar Mitzvah party, August 25, 1991.

## THE JOURNEY FOR FREEDOM

Safta was very lucky to have survived the camps, but she did so without her parents, and was uncertain about the fate of her brothers. After the camps, she arrived in Germany, a teenager, with a dream to one day reach the Holy Land for a better life. After all that she had already experienced, she embarked on the ship the Exodus, in search of freedom; little did she and its other passengers know the struggles they would encounter along the way.



A July 1947 photo (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives Reference #: 95613) of the battered illegal immigrant ship, Exodus 1947, docked in Haifa Harbor. The photo was provided by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum courtesy of Bernard Marks.



A July 1947 photo (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives Reference #: 95612) of the battered illegal immigrant ship, Exodus 1947, docked in Haifa Harbor. The photo was provided by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum courtesy of Bernard Marks.

In my attempt to locate a list of 4,500 passengers that were aboard the Exodus, I came across a hyperlink on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Holocaust Survivors and Victims Database (via the Museum's website) which references: "List of names taken from seized luggage of passengers of the Exodus 1947. [Internet Resource] (ID: 30718)" via www.exodus1947.org. The site is now inactive but available via the Internet archive site, www.archive.org: (https://web.archive.org/web/20120219224111/http://www.exodus1947.org/emapilist.html), which I last accessed on April 21, 2017. When reviewing the list, I identified what I believe to be Safta's name: **Rywka Weis**. Safta had always used the last name Weiss and a derivation of her first name and the name Regina. The name, Rywka, when pronounced is close to Rifka or Rivka. I have often found in my research of record keeping at the time, that many names and dates were inaccurate.

In 2012, I had worked closely with the staff at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. to arrange an oral history interview to

document her experience as a passenger aboard the ship. Below is the full transcript of that interview. In reading through it, you will see how the incredible journey from Hamburg, Germany to the Port of Haifa gave her a new sense of hope and helped give rise to the birth of a Jewish nation.

#### Note:

The following transcript and the associated audio recording are available via the Oral History Collection of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C.: Oral history interview with Rebecca Fried (RG Number: RG-50.030\*0664, Accession Number: 2012.169.1, Date: July 24, 2012).

Question: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Rebecca Fried conducted on July 24, 2012. The interviewer is Rachel Wagner. She is in Washington, D.C. Rebecca Fried is in Brooklyn, New York. Rebecca, can you please state your name?

Answer: Yes. Rebecca Fried.

Q: And what was your name at birth?

A: \_\_\_\_ Weiss (ph).

Q: Weiss with a "W"?

A: Yes.

Q: And where were you born?

A: In Brat (ph).

A: , Czechoslovakia.

Q: Okay. And what was your date of birth?

A: May 1st, 1928.

Q: In what--

Q: Wonderful. So we are going to focus today on your time on the Exodus?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell me where you were when you first heard about the Exodus?

A: I was in--in Hamburg. In Germany.

Q: Okay. And did you hear about--who did you hear about it from?

A: From the Haganah.

Q: And did you have friends in the Haganah? I mean who--who-ommunicated this to you?

A: No, because we were a lot of people there. We were, I think, 4,000, or 5,000, I think—

Q: Okay.

A:--for the ship to go with.

Q: And you all were assured a spot, or was there something that you needed to do to assure a spot on the boat?

A: No. No. We wouldn't do nothing.

Q: What did you--did you know--what did you think about boarding--

A: We know they taking us to Israel.

Q: And--and that was where you wanted to emigrate to?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have any friends or family that went on the voyage with you?

A: I had friends. But I don't know nobody no more that is alive or maybe they move to their children. They moved away. Nobody I know. I don't know.

Q: But when you were in Hamburg--

A: Yes.

Q:--there were--

A: Oh, we had a lot of friends because I belonged to a kibbutz.

Q: Okay. In Hamburg.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: We came from Lansford, we came.

Q: Okay.

A: The name was Mi Lansford Hausboten. So we came to Hamburg.

Q: What was the mood like when you boarded the ship?

A: Well, we were happy that we going to Israel.

Q: And were you assigned a bunk? What was it like when you got on the boat?

A: Bunk, no. It was--it was a wooden boat, and everybody was sitting wherever

we found a place on the deck. And there wasn't too much place downstairs. So I was sitting on the deck.

Q: And did you--do you remember, or did people talk about fear of not being able to get into Palestine, or were you--

A: Yeah, we were, yes. We were afraid. Because a lot of people they went to the Cyprus. They send them to Cyprus.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Usually with families. They had already children, you know. Married people.

Q: People who had had children in the DP camps?

A: No, after--after.

Q: In the--in the displaced person camps and other places.

A: And we--we were single and--sorry, I don't know if there were other more people, you know, that they were married. But they were--we were a lot of people, young people. In my group of about 200 people.

Q: Okay. And did you know how long it was going to take?

A: No. We didn't know.

Q: Okay. So what was an average day like on the journey over?

A: You mean on--on the way?

Q: Mm-hm. Did you have a job? Or, you know, what were you doing during thethe voyage before the British intercepted you?

A: I believe the men were \_\_\_\_\_--we girls we didn't do nothing, no.

Q: Okay. What--were there facilities? Were there--was there ample food?

A: Very little. Very little. But we were happy with--with everything.

Q: And when did you first note that the British had, you know, had--had comecome close or when did you realize that it wasn't going to be?

A: When we were almost in the port. In Haifa's port. So they were shooting. So we didn't have with what to shoot back. So--

Q: So--

A:--what we do. We had like vegetables, tomatoes. We was--nothing, you know, to throw on them, you know?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: We didn't with what to fight. And they didn't let us down. They kept us--I don't remember how many days. There were three ships.

Q: So let's go back before we get to the three ships--are you saying there were three British ships?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. So did you see the British ships before you heard the shooting, or was the shooting the first thing you heard?

A: We saw the ships. But we didn't think that--that's for us, you know, prepared not to let us in, to take us someplace else.

Q: So were the ships around for a day or two before the shooting, or was it--

A: No, no, no. As soon as I--as I--they see that--us. So they start to shoot already.

Q: So when the--were you on the deck when you saw the British ships?

A: That I don't remember.

Q: Okay. Do you remember where you were when you heard the shooting?

A: Between all the people, I don't remember was downstairs or upstairs. The whole ship was shaking, you know. Because it wasn't really a ship it was a \_\_\_\_\_ to put--they put together a ship.

Q: Okay. Did you--how did you know it was shooting and not some type of other noise?

A: We heard. We heard the shooting. And they said we not going to go down. They not let us go down. And we bet we will, you know. But we didn't.

Q: When you say wouldn't let you go down, do you mean on the ship?

A: No, down on--we on the ship, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And they didn't let us go down.

Q: Was there any communication that you know of between anybody on your boat and the British boat, or was there yelling? What--what other noises besides the shooting?

A: That I--I don't know. I was too young. There was, you know, maybe Haganah crew there, or--you know, some other organizations that they talk. I don't know.

Q: How old were you then?

A: I think I was 15.

Q: Okay.

A: 15 or 16. Yeah, 15.

Q: What language were you speaking on the boat?

A: \_\_\_\_+.

Q: Yiddish?

A: Yiddish, yes.

Q: And were there--and--and were there leaders on the boat? Like who was in charge?

A: We had leaders from Germany from Lansford Hausboten because we were children when we came there. So they were our leaders, you know. The owner used to send us food and--I--let's say, like me, I worked in the kitchen. You know, everybody had some work. They also teach us all kind of--somebody like us would be--something to work, you know? To--when you come to Israel, you should have something in your hand to go to work, you know.

Q: And this was when you were on the kibbutz in Germany.

A: Yes.

Q: But you weren't doing any work on the boat. Y'all were just on the boat; correct?

A: No, I didn't do no work. No.

Q: Okay. What happened after the shooting?

A: After the shooting, then we stay there, and they came then three ships. We call them the \_\_\_\_\_, you know. Like warships, not just ships. War. Like--and they took us on their ships.

Q: So --

A: Threw our stuff, you know, we had. The clothing and everything. Somebody was lucky. They didn't fall in the water. Mine fell in the water. Just what I had on, that's what I had. That's it. I have to change. No nothing.

Q: So there was the one--there was the shooting you all--you mentioned, before you end up moving on to the other three ships, that you didn't really--y'all did not have ammunition--

A: No.

Q: But did y'all try to fight back?

A: Besides the cans that we had and vegetables that we had, food that had, we threw that. We didn't have nothing, no.

Q: Did you--did you throw things, or where were you when that was happening?

A: \_\_\_\_\_+. I really don't remember that.

Q: Okay. Did they take the boat somewhere for y'all to disembark to get on the three ships? Where did that happen, or how did that happen?

A: We didn't see that they took away the ship because it happened in Haifa port, you know. And they took us from our ship to their ships.

Q: So you were at the Haifa port—

A: Yes.

Q:--when you moved--

A: Yes.

Q:--over to the other boats. Yes? Hello?

A: And then they took us on their boat and they--whoever was lucky stayed with their clothes, and who wasn't. So it fell in the water. And that's it.

Q: Your stuff fell in the water.

A: Yeah, mine clothes are in the water. And they said they take us back to Hamburg from where we came.

Q: So do you know which of the three boats you were on?

A: No. I don't know.

Q: And when they told you were going--they--when did they tell you you were going back to Hamburg?

A: When we went on the ship.

Q: So very soon after you got on the ship?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So before they told you that, did you think you would be going somewhere else?

A: No, we didn't think. We--we just felt that we going to really to come to Israel, you know, they--they think over, and they going to let us in.

Q: And how did you feel that day?

A: Terrible, terrible. We all felt terrible. Because that was our--we didn't have no home, no nothing.

Q: Right. What--do you remember any conversations you had or how--you know, what people were saying?

A: No. But we \_\_\_\_, you know, we said we are ready to fight. You know, we \_\_\_\_ talk. And we want to go, you know, to Israel, and that's--that's going to be our home and just that, you know. Nothing. We don't believe it, that they don't let us in. You know, those things. But fighting things, we didn't, no. We are ready to fight we said, but we didn't have that

Q: I want to clarify. You just said something I couldn't tell. You said you didn't think they were going to let you in, but you thought that they would eventually let you in?

A: No, we--we felt that they wouldn't. They--they--how they talk to us, you know. We didn't understand really what they--what they saying. But they told us they wouldn't let us in.

Q: When they boarded the Exodus and you were being transported to the new ships, were they speaking in English, or how did y'all communicate?

A: In English. In English, they was speaking but not to us. Somebody was there who translated for us, you know.

Q: So you didn't speak English at that time.

A: No, no.

Q: So did you have any interactions with any of the British soldiers?

A: We didn't have, no. No. No.

Q: Okay.

A: No.

Q: So you're in Haifa, and you are now on this new boat, which you said it's--it's not a-- was it a wooden or was it more of a--was it metal?

A: It was Exodus boat. Theirs was a war boat, you know, like—

Q: Like a war boat.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. So metal. Not wood.

A: Yeah--no. But Exodus was wood. You know, when we went out from Hamburg that- -that was a wooden boat. But when we came to Haifa--I don't know what happened to that boat. I really mean it. I don't know what happened to it. In the museum someplace.

Q: Probably. When you are on this--this British boat and they say that you're going to go back to Hamburg--

A: Yes.

Q:--what was the attitude? We talked about how y'all felt that day. But how was the attitude on the journey back?

A: Terrible, terrible. Ones--we got crying. There was one woman died.

Q: On the journey back?

A: Yes.

Q: What did--how did she die?

A: Just a heart attack.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes. She died, and they put her in a--a sheet. They threw her in the water. And one beautiful girl, she got--you know, she got crazy. She couldn't believe--she really got crazy and she run around there on the boat and she talk things like, you know, beautiful girl.

Q: Was she with y'all the whole time on the boat?

A: Yes. She was with us on boat the whole time, yes. We tried, you know, with her to-- to be nice and everything, but it didn't help. She was singing a lot and talking--just \_\_\_\_ and talking. And me, I didn't have clothes to change.

Q: What were the conditions like on the boat? Did you all--

A: Very bad. Very, very bad.

Q: Worse than the Exodus?

A: Yes. Sure. That's--was a sign we went with, you know, that we going to Israel. Here we were very bitter that they taking us back. And, like me, I didn't have to change. So let's say I had to go in the bathroom. Yes?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: There was a tall man. I remember him, his face. I ask him, "Can I have your jacket just to go in the bathroom?" Because he was tall, his jacket was good for me, you know. So that's how I--I went to bathroom and I--I--I came back and I sat there on the--on the deck.

Q: So you--you didn't have any clothing.

A: Nothing. Just what I had on me. And the salt water started to, you know--to eat

it up to--to fall apart on me. And so from the--the--from the--not the beach--how you say it? On the water.

Q: The salt water?

A: The salt water, yeah.

Q: So were you ever in the water or was just the environment?

A: No, no, no. We went three months we on the water. Three months.

Q: So how long were you in the boat on the way to Palestine?

A: Long time. I don't remember. That I don't remember. This I remember. We were three months.

Q: On the way back?

A: On the way back.

Q: Okay.

A: We went to other--lot of other countries. I remember we went--they gave us biscuits with worms to eat.

Q: They gave--okay. So what--so you didn't have any clothing. Where did you sleep? What was the food like?

A: \_\_\_\_+. There was no food really. Just biscuits and water. They give me--they give us biscuits with worms in it.

Q: So where--where did you sleep?

A: There where we were sitting.

Q: Were you able to move around the ship freely, or were you confined to a space?

A: No, no. Wasn't that you went around there. I couldn't go around and a few more that we lost our clothes, you know. So we were sitting.

Q: But had you had more clothing, would you have been able--would you have been allowed to move around the boat, or were you restricted?

A: Yeah, we were allowed to move around, but it wasn't such a lot of place.

Q: Okay. So you're on the boat for three months. You said that you went to a lot of different countries or different places. So where do you remember that you stopped?

A: I--I remember France--that there. And they--they gave us bread. You know the long bread? The French bread?

Q: Baguette?

A: "Children, don't go down. Don't go down. Stay on the ship--on the boat."

Q: They told you--the French told you to stay on the ship.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you see the French people or interact with them, or did you just hear about it?

A: We--we saw the people. We saw the people, yes.

Q: Did you talk to any of them?

A: I don't remember. I--but a few people came running with food and bread. And they said--you know, they put their hands in the bag. And they told us, "Don't go down. Stay on the ship."

Q: Do you know why they told you that?

A: I don't know. They wanted maybe we should--if not, they--they going to kill us maybe--the English. I don't know. They would never let us in.

Q: So the French told you to stay on the boat.

A: Yes. And they--maybe they knew that they taking us back to Hamburg.

Q: When you talked about the bread with worms, did you ever participate in any hunger strike?

A: Oh, we did, yes. When we came to the France--to France, we told them that. That's why they brought us food.

Q: So you had not been eating on the way back.

A: On the way back, really very little, very little.

Q: Okay.

A: Water, we had. Water, yes.

Q: Now, after you are in France, where was the next stop?

A: The next stop was Hamburg.

Q: Okay. So how--so when you were in France, before y'all left to go back to Hamburg, did any of you think about trying to get off the boat, or did you think about getting off the boat? What were your thoughts?

A: No, no. Because we kept together. We still thought in Hamburg we will go back to Israel. We are going to try to go back.

Q: Did y'all talk about that and make a decision as a group?

A: No. Everybody talked about it. There wasn't really groups. We were because we came there together, you know, the first time before we went to Israel before we went on the Exodus. So we had a few that we know each other. We got to know a few people. But not all of them, you know.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But we--we talked to--we going to try again and again because we didn't have where to go some place else.

Q: So your thought--did you think if you were going to go back to Palestine, going to Hamburg was the best idea?

A: Yes. We didn't know that because when we came there, you know, like in Germany, they had like--how you say in English? I don't know. You understand Yiddish?

Q: Not very well.

A: You know like--like they went up there and to look who--if somebody does run away. I don't know how you call that.

Q: Like a lookout?

A: Lookout. Yeah, lookout. And they looked, you know, if somebody was able to run away or what. English.

Q: Well, Like a guard tower or a --

A: Yeah. \_\_\_\_\_+ so we had them for a few days. But then they disappeared. We don't know how, when they disappeared. Maybe a few people left. I don't know. And then came the--I don't know--not the Haganah, maybe another organization, you know, from Israel. And they taught us how to shoot, how to go and--to jump from a window out, you know?

Q: So this is when you were already back in Hamburg.

A: Hamburg, yes.

Q: So let's back up just a minute. How did it feel when you--you get to the port at Hamburg?

A: Oh, it was very--what can we do? We knew that--that's--that's it. We have no other way.

Q: Did they--did you know where you were going once you got to Hamburg? Did they say where you--

A: No. We didn't know where we going to--no, because--told they going to take us to Cyprus because a lot of people, they went--they took to Cyprus. So we didn't know exactly where they going to take us.

Q: So when you get to Hamburg, what happens when the boat gets to the port?

A: So we--we all went down from there from the boat. Everybody went out. They told us to go out. And they watched us. We shouldn't run away, you know, we (?should?) go someplace else.

Q: And did they tell you, when you were coming off the boat, where they were taking you?

A: They said, "We going to take you back from where you came."

Q: And where did you end up going to?

A: That was--that was in Hamburg. That's all.

Q: But what was--were you in a DP--or what was the name of the kibbutz or the DP camp? Where were you located?

A: I was in Auschwitz-Birkenau. They didn't say that. Nothing. They didn't talk about the--the camps, no.

Q: No. But when you--no, I mean the displaced persons camp. When you--when you get off the boat in Hamburg, where do you go in Hamburg?

A: I don't know. We stayed in Hamburg. We didn't go no place.

Q: So were you in a displaced persons camp? Where were you being held? Were you allowed--could you leave?

A: I don't remember if we stayed in the city or we--we--or they took us--I don't remember. I think we stayed in the city some or--I don't know. That I don't remember.

Q: Were you allowed to leave you, or are were you still under--

A: Some people left. When they left, you know, they didn't watch us anymore. So some people left. Some people, I think, stayed in Germany, too. I don't know. I don't know. I was--we wasn't thinking, you know. Too young to think.

Q: So how long do you think you were in Hamburg at that time?

A: A few months, I think. Two months, maybe.

Q: And where did you go after that?

A: Back to Israel.

Q: So did you go straight from Hamburg back to Palestine?

A: We came to Hamburg from Israel the first time in 1947.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And then when we went back to Israel was '48.

Q: So were you in Hamburg the whole time?

A: Yes.

Q: And--

A: But--

Q:--you mentioned before they were teaching you how to do things. Was this in Hamburg?

A: Hamburg, yes. They--was told to climb on the rope, you know? The Haganah--the Israelis.

Q: Uh-huh. So did you—

A: They were.

Q: You were--were you just waiting? You just wanted to wait until you could go back to Palestine? Or what were you thinking at the time?

A: We said we were going to fight. We going to fight \_\_\_\_\_+ our land, our Israel.

Q: How did you secure passage to Israel the second time?

A: I think--I don't know if I was 16 years old. I don't know exactly. I don't remember really. I don't remember. I really don't. Maybe I was 17 \_\_\_\_\_+

Q: When you were going back the second time, did you have the confidence that this time you would be allowed in, or were you scared that the same thing would happen?

A: No, we are--we were allowed to go in already because the English left. In Israel, maybe there was Arabs. I don't know. But we--Ben-Gurion--then Ben-Gurion became the--you know, came in and was Israel, you know.

Q: But--

A: Oh, no. They was still fighting. We were still fighting. I remember they took blood from us, you know. They brought us to Hadara, and they wanted we should go to war, you know.

Q: So you were able to secure legal passage to go back to Palestine—

A: Yes.

Q:--in '48.

A: Yes.

Q: What was that trip like? Or was the boat similar to the Exodus? Or what were the details?

A: I--I really don't know. I really don't remember because I didn't move. Once \_\_\_\_+--I couldn't move because I didn't have clothes. My clothes was really--almost fell--you know--

Q: This is on the second trip back?

A: Yeah. The second trip--no. I had already. My brother--I had two brothers. They found me after the war. They found me.

Q: Right. So let's go back. So you were in Hamburg, and this is after the Exodus. And now we are in '48.

A: That was--that I think--we came--yes, we were in Hamburg, yes.

Q: And so you get on another--a second boat to try to go to Palestine.

A: Yes.

Q: So that was what I was asking about. What was that boat like?

A: That was okay. But not luxury, you know. Plain, plain boat.

Q: So was it like the Exodus in a wooden boat, or was it metal?

A: I think--I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: But it was better than on the Exodus.

Q: And how did you feel--did you feel confident that this time you were going to get in?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: On the way already we had that year, you know--it's Palestine. Still is Palestine-that they going to let us in.

Q: And did you have enough supplies and food?

A: We had food, yeah. The Haganah gave us food. And then like we had to wash ourthey give us--my brothers gave me clothes, and we had where to wash our clothes.

Q: Were your brothers on the boat with you?

A: No, no. They found me in Czechoslovakia after the war in \_\_\_\_--not \_\_\_\_, Prague.

Q: So you mentioned, though, they helped you get clothes. But did you see them in Hamburg--

A: No.

Q:--between trips?

A: No, no.

Q: So when you got back to Hamburg--when you come back to Hamburg and you have no clothing--

A: Yes.

Q:--how--

A: They sent package.

Q: Oh, a package. Okay.

A: +.

Q: So you're on this--do you know the name of this boat?

A: I don't remember, no.

Q: Okay.

A: No.

Q: And on the way--or what--where do you arrive in--in Palestine?

A: We arrive to Hadara.

Q: And how did you feel?

A: They said we have to go and fight. They still was fighting, you know, and we were already taught how to fight. They took blood from us right away, and we should be ready to go to war.

Q: And how did you feel about that?

A: I didn't feel so good about it because they told us on the way the--the menthere was a few men also and women older than me, and they told us, "If you go in the army, you going to have a baby." And I didn't understand. Because it's not like now the young people know everything when they are 10, 11, 12, you know?

Q: Right.

A: I came from a very religious family. So I said I'm not going in the army to have a baby. What I'm going to do with a baby? So they took blood from me. But I was hiding. Three nights I was sleeping under--three couples were in a room, and I was hiding at night under their bed. They didn't even know that I am there. And so after the third day-- they came from a kibbutz \_\_\_\_+. And they ask who wants to go in a kibbutz. So me and other two people we went there. So there was no men there. They should do the work in a kibbutz, you know. I was worked there very, very hard. For a year I stayed in kibbutz.

Q: What did you--what was your job?

A: There all the--every time they changed. First, was from the bananas to--to take down the leaves, the big leaves, you know, with a big knife. The--the sun should come to the bananas. They would get ripe. And then the second was I--I worked in the kitchen because I knew--I told them I know how to work in the kitchen. And the third job was to wash the diapers from babies. And no money. They didn't--they just give you short pants, long pants, khaki. You know, for khaki? And sandals. And that's it. And food. Okay. We were happy. We had food. We had where to sleep. And I was there for a year. A year's time.

Q: Did your brothers emigrate or--

A: My brother, after year, one came to America, and one is still now in Israel. He is-- God bless him--he is 90 years old.

Q: So you--but you came to Israel first.

A: Yeah, I came to Israel. Yeah. I came first, yes.

Q: Well, Palestine at the time--sorry--actually.

A: Yes. All the same Israel but still fighting. And there I got to know my husband, also, in 1950.

Q: And how long were you in Israel?

A: 11 years.

Q: And why did you come to the United States?

A: I don't know. We had a friend. He came before us, and he said, "You come to America. Your husband is going to make a lot of money" and you this-and-that. And we came, and I'm sorry to the day.

Q: You wish you would have stayed in Israel?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you--after the journey on the Exodus, were you--did you stay in touch with people that you had gone through that experience with?

A: That we went together to--on the Exodus?

Q: Well, if they were on the Exodus with you, this was the same group of people when you went back to Palestine.

A: Yes. You know what? When we came back to Hamburg, we--everybody--every girl has to wash clothes for three guys, you know, because the men didn't know how to wash clothes. So everybody had to--every girl had three boys to wash for them clothes. And we did that, you know. We were very close, one with each other, but not, you know--we were always together.

Q: And did you stay in touch with them when you lived in Israel?

A: Yes, yes. Yes. They--even one of them, too, wanted to marry me. But--we were still young, and we didn't--we didn't know what we want, you know. We didn't have nothing. We didn't have no money. We didn't have our home. We didn't have nothing. So that's why everybody lived for himself, to see from what we can live.

Q: And looking at the Exodus experience, sort of as a whole, how did you feel when you were experiencing that as a concentration camp survivor?

A: Very bad. Very bad. We thought that's it. We finished in concentration camp because I saw when they burned my--my parents, my brother. And the other brother two weeks before the war was over, they killed him. They shoot him. So I know that's it.

Q: But--my question is when--because of what you had experienced in the camps, when you were on the Exodus, did you--how did--I mean how did you feel having this experience, as a Holocaust survivor, after what you had already survived?

A: \_\_\_\_+. But we were happy that we going to a land that was going to be ours. We were going to fight for it.

Q: Did you think of the British in the same way as you thought of your European captors, or what were your feelings on--on the British?

A: Well, we--we didn't got to know them. We--we didn't see nothing. We didn't know about the British. We didn't know--we didn't know, no.

Q: Okay. Are there--are there any other details from that experience and being on the boat that you can think of that we haven't covered?

A: No, I don't know. I really don't know no more. I don't--I don't. It was--it was terrible, a terrible thing. And even when--when we were in Israel already was very hard and-- because we didn't have no homes, no nothing. We had to go-not only me, even people married. They didn't have--you know, they lived in other \_\_\_\_ houses that they found, you know, they find something empty. It was very hard. Very, very hard.

Q: When you went on the kibbutz in Israel--

A: Yes.

Q:--were you assigned your own room or bunk or--you know, where were you living?

A: No, no. We are a few girls in a room.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Any of them from the Exodus?

A: Yeah.

Q: So you were really with the same group the whole time.

A: I had a cousin. I don't know if she's still alive. She went from Brooklyn to Florida to live because of children and this. We were in touch not for a long time. I don't know now. I don't--I lost the--the--lost touch with her.

Q: But she was with you on the Exodus and at the kibbutz?

A: Yeah.

Q: What was her name?

A: She wasn't in touch with me anymore, but we found each other in Brooklyn.

Q: What was her name, or what is her name?

A: Dora Lebovitz (ph). But she was--the Lebovitz was after her husband. The first name before, I don't know her name. But Dorry (ph). We call Dorry. But Dora. That's Dora.

Q: Dora Lebovitz.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: And she has two children. One is a doctor in Florida. Very, very nice people, yes. It was hard. It was hard. Then I got married. I was with children.

Q: And did you talk about your experience?

A: Oh, yeah. We always used to talk about it. Some people didn't believe that the English did that to us. Even now they don't believe there was an Exodus. A lot of people. I think so.

Q: So you--you--actually--you talked about your specific experience on the Exodus.

A: Yes, yes. A lot. But, you know, when we came--when we came--then right away to war. They got killed. I knew a boy--we were--we were, you know, on the ship, were also together talking and that he died the next day when he went to war.

Q: You--you mean in--in Palestine.

A: In Palestine. He was 17 years old. And a lot of--of--a lot of people got killed right away.

Q: And how--how did you feel about that, as a survivor who had already survived so much, then participating in fighting?

A: They said they have to fight. They have to fight because we suffered so much and they killed our--our parents, our families. So we had to fight. And the Haganah told us, it's going to be ours, you know. So we going to have a home here and we going to live here and that's what we felt. And everybody who didn't go, we worked hard, you know. Because--the men mostly. In every kibbutz and in every moshav, they went to war. So whoever could went to help them, you know. I didn't go because for one purpose because they told me I was going to have a baby, you know. So I said \_\_\_\_\_+ what am I going to do. So I didn't go. A lot didn't go away. Girls, not men. All the men--all the younger boys went. And a few survived. And we got in touch. And I was sick anyway. Because they hit me in the--in the concentration camp, they hit me on the head, and I was fainting a lot from that.

Q: You were fainting a lot?

A: Yes.

Q: Did this happen when you were on the--

A: Oh, also, on the Exodus, yes. It was--I had--I had convulsions.

Q: Did--

A: +.

Q: Was there any medical staff, or who helped you when you--

A: Oh, my friends did. My friends. Even I worked here. I worked. And I used to just for a second, you know, I was \_\_\_\_\_+ custom jewelry. So they first took away my health and \_\_\_\_+ and they laid me down for a half an hour and then I came back and I was working again. And the same thing happened in Israel. I worked very hard.

Q: So--but there was no--I mean were there doctors on the boat that helped take care of you, or what was the situation like?

A: No. No, not really. No, no. Maybe there was. I don't know. They didn't help me.

Q: Okay. I think that covers--I'm trying to think if there's anything else that we didn't cover because you've already done another oral history where I think we have all the information. We just didn't get everything about your experience on the Exodus.

A: Yes. I--I--yeah, from Spielberg. I was interviewed for two hours, yes.

Q: Yes, I watched it. But it--but it was good that we did this today because the-we didn't cover a lot on the Exodus.

A: Thank you.

Q: In that interview.

A: Thank you.

Q: So is there anything else you would like to add?

A: I would just like to add that I'm sorry that I left Israel.

Q: You're sorry that you left Israel. I'll make sure that that makes it in. Well, I appreciate your time. And I'm sure--you know, stay in touch with the museum. But I appreciate you taking the time to cover the history today.

A: Thank you very much. I got pictures from the Exodus. My--my grandson gave it to me. I don't know from which museum they send it to me. Very nice. The whole ship.

Q: I saw that you had one that you showed in your other oral history. There was a photograph.

A: Yes, there was a photograph. I--I saw it--I was sitting by doctor's \_\_\_\_+ in the office. And I used to--now I cannot see. I have macular degeneration. So I don't read so much. So I--I see a magazine there, and I take a look at the Exodus. So I tear it out, and I took it home. So that's why I--I had from the Exodus, the picture. But he send me now a bigger picture, and I going to frame it.

Q: Yeah, we have many in the photo archive. So if he ever needs to, to check with the museum. We definitely have photos of the--of the ship.

A: Photos of the ship. I'm sure. He wants--my-my grandson wants to come go in the museum there and see me there and to read about the Exodus if you are going to put it on some, you know.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I don't know there are more people that they talking about the Exodus.

Q: That I don't know. I would--we would have to do the research for you. But, you know, I have not met another Exodus survivor.

A: Oh, I see. I see. If--if you--you find somebody, I would like you to send to me.

Q: Okay.

A: Okay. You have my address.

Q: We have your information. Well, I want to thank you again for taking the time. And I know it's a difficult subject matter to--to talk about.

A: It is. It is very much, really.

Q: But it's--it's great that we can document it.

A: Thank you very much.

Q: Thank you very much. I hope you have a great day.

A: Thank you. You, too.

Q: All right. Thank you, Rebecca. Bye-bye.

Around the same time of the interview, I found a photograph of the Exodus on eBay. I purchased the photograph and had it professionally framed to give as a gift to Safta; she proudly displays the photograph in her apartment and often tells her visitors: "I was on that ship."



In January 2017, I had commissioned Toby Gotesman Schneier, an oil painter and daughter of Holocaust survivors, to share Safta's story aboard the Exodus through art. Toby and I collaborated throughout its composition to get it just right; the result was a beautiful tribute.



The painting, "FOR SAFTA" depicts the Jewish refugees on the Exodus. The 4,500 passengers were displaced persons or Holocaust survivors. In the reflection of the water, an arm with the number A-6492 is visible; this is Safta's Auschwitz tattoo number. In the distance is the silhouette of Jerusalem, signifying a common theme in Judaism: "Next Year in Jerusalem".

I have been "gifted" by Robert Fried with the extreme privilege of depicting the "Exodus Ship" in loving honor of his safta, Rifka Fried. Rifka is the paradigm of human survivorship. A loving and happy woman who rose from the Hell of the Holocaust and built a beautiful life and family. A woman who shared her legacy and her story with her grandson with so much impact, that he is forever committed to keeping the stories of the Holocaust alive, as am I. The painting will be featured in my May 2017, Exhibition, "COLORS OF THE HOLOCAUST" in Chelsea, New York City. Thank you, Robert & Rifka, for bestowing this honor upon me.

Toby Gotesman Schneier

### **PUTTING A NAME TO HIS PHOTO**

In late 2013, I had purchased Roman Vishniac's book, <u>A Vanished World</u>. The book, published in 1986, contains photographs that Vishniac had taken of Jewish life in the 1930s while he was in Eastern Europe. As I read the book, I noticed that several of the photographs are of boys studying in Yeshiva in Czechoslovakia. I recalled that I had seen similar photographs in a book that Safta has in her apartment; she had always mentioned that the only photograph that she had of her youngest brother, Simcha, was in the book. The photograph she was referring to was taken while Simcha was studying with other boys (including a cousin) at his Yeshiva, in Czechoslovakia. In January 2014, when doing some research about Roman Vishniac, I arrived at the International Center of Photography's (ICP) web site, <a href="http://vishniac.icp.org">http://vishniac.icp.org</a>; the site which now maintains the digital archives of Vishniac's photographs. A search of the web site's online archives revealed similar photos, including the photograph of Simcha Weiss!



Roman Vishniac

[Students and teachers in cheder (Jewish elementary school), Brod], ca. 1935-38. © Mara Vishniac Kohn, courtesy International Center of Photography.

I had immediately contacted the ICP to let them know that I had identified my great-uncle (he is the boy on the left in the photograph, with his hand raised; the boy next to him is a cousin). The staff of the ICP involved with the Vishniac Archive were very happy that I made the identification and I put them in contact with Safta so that she could provide information about Simcha and life in Brod, Czechoslovakia before the Holocaust.

The following are excerpts from an interview Susan Carlson (Curatorial Assistant, Vishniac Archive) of the ICP had conducted with Safta via telephone on January 13, 2014:

### Memories of Simcha and Her Brothers

Rebecca had four brothers, three older and one younger. Simcha, her younger brother, was the one who appears in a few of Vishniac's photographs. Rebecca knows he was 12 years old in 1944, so he was born around 1932. He was learning in school. He was a very quiet, very good looking boy. Simcha was very sweet and a very good kid; her brothers were all good kids. During the holidays people would come and they used to sing. She mentioned that her brothers had good singing voices.

### **Memories of Brod**

"It was a nice little town, maybe 200 people lived there. A lot of fields, potatoes and tomatoes, corn, farms. Everybody helped the other one. Produce was shared, whatever they had." She remembers lamp lights being fueled by petroleum and making bread and cakes, everything. There were chickens, cows, and goats."

There was a forest where she used to go there with her friends to pick strawberries and blueberries. They used to dance and sing. Rebecca was hit with a ruler in school because she was left-handed.

"What I remember I remember very nice things. I liked it. Nobody was rich. There was a few rich people. They had a lot of fields. They had people that worked for them. They used to sell milk. They had a lot of cows."

The town did not have a train station, but once a day there was a bus that went to and from Mukacevo and another bus that went to another town.

"I learned in a Czech school it was very nice. Across from us where I lived was a big school. My brother also learned there, I learned there until they took us away. Boys and girls in the same school. It was religious, but not as religious as today."

"My mother wanted that I should be a seamstress. Nobody wanted to teach me [because I was left handed]."

"It was a very, very nice town a lot of green flowers. We had tomatoes and cucumbers. We didn't have a sink in the house, we had a well. In the summer we used to put watermelon down there."

"It was a nice little town. It was nice to live there until they come and took us away. From then on we suffered a lot."

There were a lot of young children, boys and girls, in Brod. She found a friend of hers by the crematorium by Auschwitz and he said goodbye.

Following the interview, Susan Carlson had coordinated with Roman Vishniac's daughter, Mara Vishniac Kohn to obtain a print of the photograph of Simcha, which Safta has cherished for many years. I had the photograph framed and it now hangs in Safta's apartment:



In September 2014, Steve Lipman, a writer for *The Jewish Week*, a weekly newspaper serving New York's Jewish community, had contacted me for a story regarding the Vishniac archives. Steve had subsequently interviewed me and wrote a wonderful article, "Old Holocaust-era Photos Find New Life Online".

# The Jewish Week

# Old Holocaust-era Photos Find New Life Online

Digitalized archives of Roman Vishniac will enable survivors to identify relatives' images.

September 9, 2014 By: Steve Lipman

In a black-and-white, undated photograph from an unidentified cheder in pre-World War II Europe, a row of young Jewish boys, caps on their heads, are sitting at wooden desks, brittle old books of Torah spread before them.

It was a familiar image for Rob Fried, who grew up in East Meadow, L.I.

He'd often visit his grandparents in Borough Park, the Brooklyn neighborhood where thousands of Holocaust survivors settled after the war ended and the death camps were liberated; his grandmother, Auschwitz survivor Rebecca Fried, would show him that picture. On a page of "Polish Jews," a 1947 pictorial record of Europe's lost Jewish culture, one boy, second from the right in the photo, his face a few inches from the Torah, was her younger brother, Simcha Weiss.

Simcha, who was growing up in a chasidic family in Czechoslovakia, died at 7 in Auschwitz, where Mrs. Fried's parents also perished.

Two decades after he first saw the photograph of his deceased great-uncle, Rob Fried recognized that same photograph in 1983's "A Vanished World" (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), Roman Vishniac's instant-classic pictorial history of Jewish life in Germany and Eastern Europe before the war. Fried recognized that Vishniac — who traveled throughout Central and Eastern Europe several times on assignment from the Joint Distribution Committee between 1935 and 1938 — had assumed the unofficial role of the photographic chronicler of disappeared Jewish life in the Old Country. Vishniac had also produced the 1965 book "Polish Jews: A Pictorial Record."

Fried contacted the International Center of Photography, in Manhattan, which last year hosted an exhibition about Vishniac's work, and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, in Washington, a repository of Shoah artifacts, with information about the photograph of Simcha Weiss. Both institutions thanked Fried for the information, and indicated that they would include the facts in future educational materials, said Fried, a computer forensic scientist who lives in Valley Stream, L.I.

More identification of faces in Vishniac's photographs will likely take place in the next few years.

Last month, the ICP (icp.org) and the Museum (ushmm.org) announced a joint project that has digitalized more than 9,000 of Vishniac's negatives (most of them not previously printed or published) and some 30,000 of his other assorted written materials, recordings and photographic records. The archival project is making all the items available, at no cost, at vishniac.icp.org, and is encouraging relatives of survivors — most likely, children and grandchildren — to contact either institution if they recognize people in the photographs, few of which contain any identifying details.

The missing names will add to the historical record of the Shoah era.

"Within a decade our ability to do this will run out," said Maya Benton, curator of ICP's Vishniac Archives, alluding to the survivor generation's mortality. An authority on Vishniac since her graduate studies at Harvard University a decade ago, Benton is editor of "Roman Vishniac Rediscovered," which will be published next year by ICP in conjunction with DelMonico Books/Prestel.

While Rob Fried reached out to ICP and the Museum last year, neither institution has yet been able to verify the information that survivors or survivors' relatives have submitted of relatives' identification information in the few weeks since the digitalized images went online, she said. The institutions have publicized the project through social media, survivor organizations, Jewish museums around the world, and other Jewish groups.

Though the website is only in English now, translators are available who can speak and read many languages, Benton said. The photographs, she said, are likely to draw more interest — especially among survivors' descendants — than written history or similar documents. "Images are universal."

"This project will introduce many people to one of the 20th century's pre-eminent photographers while greatly increasing our understanding of his subjects," said Michael Grunberger, director of collections at the Museum, in a statement. "We are excited to bring this collection to an



Auschwitz survivor Rebecca Fried stands in front of a Roman Vishniac photo that includes an image of her brother, who perished in the death camp.

even-wider audience," said Mark Lubell, ICP executive director.

Michael Berenbuam, Holocaust scholar and author, called the archives project a "wonderful contribution [to Holocaust documentation]. Would that it was done 25 years ago, would that it was done 50 years ago" — when more survivors were alive. "Time is limited."

The archival project follows a retrospective exhibition of Vishniac's photographs at ICP last year; the traveling exhibition recently ended a four-month run at Amsterdam's Jewish Historical Museum, and is to be hosted this month at Paris' Museum of Jewish Art and History, then next year at Warsaw's Museum of the History of Polish Jews (vishniac.icp.org/traveling-exhibition).

Vishniac, who was born in Russia in 1897 and then immigrated to the U.S. in 1940, died in 1990.

In Moscow he studied biology and zoology; though he spent much of his professional career as an expert in photomicroscopy and time-lapse photography, he is best known for the pictures he took of European Jewry.

According to a 2010 New York Times Magazine story about Vishniac, he intentionally shaped both his photographic images and the details of his past (indicating that he had set out through Europe on his own initiative, rather than on a JDC assignment; that he had selectively released only the most emotive photographs; that he was sometimes less than accurate in some images' caption details.

The range and quality of Vishniac's photographs are their own best witness, Benton said. "In both the exhibit and the book we deal with Vishniac's evolving reception and legacy, and how the photographs have come to symbolize Jewish life in Eastern Europe. We have also been correcting misinformation and working to verify captions, dates and locations.

"The negatives are the negatives, they were not spliced, in-painted or manipulated in any way," Benton said. "They represent what he saw and captured through his camera's lens. The photographs/negatives ... present a visual document of the people and towns that ceased to exist after the Holocaust."

Vishniac, Benton said, "was a Jewish photographer" — it turns out he photographed the DP where her mother was as a child. "This is a very personal project. I grew up with his books," Vishniac's photographs serving as "visual reference points."

In research at the Vishniac estate, Benton found that Vishniac, whose assignment was to document Jewish poverty, had taken pictures of Jews of various religious and economic levels, both rural and urban. "He was a very versatile photographer."

Benton formed a friendship with the photographer's daughter, Mara Vishniac Kohn, who is donating many items from her father's estate to ICP. "She wanted to figure out how to best honor his legacy."

The Center has partnered with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in creating the online archive, Benton said, because "ICP is not a Jewish institution. [The project] needed an interdisciplinary approach."

The new online archive is similar to "Our Shared Legacy," a three-year-old database of JDC documents, part of the organization's Global Archives, which also encouraged survivors' input in identifying faces in old photographs. (The website: jdc.org/sharedlegacy).

Linda Levi, director of the Global Archives, called Shared Legacy "a proven success. Thousands of people visited the site, making it actually the most popular feature on the JDC Archives website. Thousands have found documents that helped them in their genealogical and family history searches, primarily documents listing help extended by JDC to family members. We received many responses from people identifying family members in our photographs. Often, people were extremely grateful as they did not previously have photos of themselves and family members from this period."

Rob Fried, who last year published "From Generation To ..." (WingSpan Press), an illustrated book of his Holocaust-themed poetry and reproductions of family Holocaust-related documents (fromgenerationto.com), said the digitalized Vishniac Archives are an important tool in helping survivors complete the record of their wartime experiences.

"I think it's really important that we [share] our grandparents' stories," he said.

His grandmother, now 86, who was one of the 4,515 passengers on the SS Exodus in 1947, still lives in Borough Park.

The Vishniac photograph of Simcha Weiss is the only picture she owns of her brother; Rob Fried made an enlargement of the photograph for his grandmother. Framed, it now hangs on her living room wall.

### A FRIENDSHIP & PARTNERSHIP

In late 2014, I had just finished reading a wonderful book, <u>Helga's Diary</u> by Helga Weiss, a Czech artist from Prague and a Holocaust survivor. As I was also an author of a book on the Holocaust, I wanted to contact Helga and let her know that I thought that her book was an excellent read and inquire if she could autograph my copy; in turn, I would mail her an autographed copy of my book. Now in her 80s, Helga still lives in the same apartment in Prague, where she was born. After the Holocaust, she had returned to the apartment. In January 2015, in order to try to obtain Helga's contact information, I had reached out to the Jewish Museum in Prague (JMP), a museum of Jewish heritage located in Prague, Czech Republic for assistance. The staff of the JMP were kind enough to connect me with her. Helga honored my request to autograph my copy of her book and I had sent her an autographed copy of my book. When Helga had received my book in the mail, she sent me an a very special email message:

The book is already closed and placed on my bedside table. I didn't need any translation. The words and illustrations are simple understandable, very impressive and moving! The events and feelings in the Holocaust were exactly like that. I admire you and thank for writing it. Yesterday, when I had received the package, my two-and-a-half-year-old great granddaughter was present next to me. She wished to see the present. So, I unpacked the box and we looked together at the illustrations but not long, she didn't like it. She said, "It is too sad, I prefer a more joyful book." That is what we wish as well. A more happy life for the new generation but to keep the memory alive! Let us hope your poems and my diary will be a little help to it.

Helga and I remain in contact and exchange email messages from time to time, especially around the Jewish holidays. It is always wonderful to hear from her.

While exchanging emails with the JMP staff in my attempt to contact Helga, I had mentioned that I am the grandson of four Holocaust survivors and that my paternal grandparents were from Czechoslovakia. I had also mentioned that Safta was living in New York, and inquired if there was an opportunity to have the JMP interview her about her life in Czechoslovakia before the Holocaust. I

was notified that if a member of the staff were to travel to the United States in the future, there may be an opportunity for an in-person interview. Fortunately, that opportunity came a lot sooner than I expected. Monika Hanková (The Archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague) of the JMP had traveled to New York in February 2015. During her visit, she had conducted an interview with Safta. Here is the transcript of the interview, conducted in English:

Interview 0117 Rebecca Fried

Born: 1. 5. 1928 Brod nad Išavou Address: Brooklyn, NY 11219

Recorded by Monika Hanková

Transcribed by Miroslava Ludvíková

M. H.: So this is the interview with Rebeca Fried and ... Can you tell me more about your childhood?

R. F.: About my childhood?

M. H.: You spent in Brod?

R. F.: Yeah, I was in Brod, there is another Brod, my Brod is Brod nad Išavou...

M. H.: Yes.

R. F.: Not far from Mukachevo, about 39 kilometres from each other.

M. H.: And what do you remember from the years you spent there? Tell me about the school...

R. F.: I was going to Czech school.

M. H.: It was Czech school, yes?

R. F.: Yes. And I forgot to talk, because nobody talks with me Czech. I know songs, Czech songs... And I had four brothers, my father, my mother, four brothers. And the brothers mostly were away, they were not at home, they went to the school, to yeshiva, they were bigger then I. Two were home with us, we were poor...

M. H.: Yeah.

R. F.: ... but everybody, you know, in those little towns, everybody was poor and nobody was too rich. I remember, we had a goat. And chickens run, like a little town.

M. H.: And what profession was you father?

R. F.: How you call it? Makes roofs.

M. H.: Aha, yeah.

R. F.: And my mother, she was home. My mother was very good cook, so if there was a wedding or anything, she had to come, if she tasted that, she said it is ok, it was ok. Everybody loved her, everybody. Young girls they used to come every Saturday to sit, she used to sing for them and tell them stories, really, she was special, special.

M. H.: Yes, such a nice atmosphere.

R. F.: Yes, very nice. My father was a quiet man, my brothers were big, you know, the bigger ones, and we were three of us at home. And we went to school, we had also Hebrew school once a week, but my mother, she should rest in peace, she taught me...

M. H.: Yes, she taught you cooking...

R. F.: I was only girl of four brothers, only girl, so...

M. H.: Do you remember what she cooked?

R. F.: Yeah. I remember...

M. H.: Do you remember the names of the...

R. F.: ...she wanted to teach me how to bake.

M. H.: How to bake?

R. F.: Yes, it was different like now. They have the machines and the ovens and there wasn't ovens like that, you know, we had ovens like in the house, and we put wood there inside, on the top you could sleep, before night you made something what should become sour, the bread should go up. And she said: "I am gonna wake her up, she must learn." And then when it came morning, she said: "Oh, she is so young, I am not going to wake her." (smile) And I have never learned, how to bake, never. But I had a husband, a baker, so it was ok.

M. H.: Yes, it is nice.

R. F.: This is my husband, yes.

M. H.: Oh yes, it is very nice photograph.

R. F.: It's gonna be eighteen years, on Pesach. Eighteen years that he passed away.

M. H.: The family was very religious? Did you visit the synagogue very often?

R. F.: Yes, very religious, yes. My mother more than my father. He as religious was very quiet. He never hit a child or something, or yelled at him, you know, ... my mother did, but not my father, never. Whatever we asked, whatever we said, he was always "yes", never "no".

M. H.: Tell my about visiting of the synagogue? How often you ...

R. F.: Yes, every day, every day.

M. H.: Yes.

R. F.: And we ... my mother used to go shops. But we were all very religious here. Did you heard of Nitra?

M. H.: Yes, I know Nitra.

R. F.: My brothers went to learn there, to Nitra.

M. H.: Aha ...

R. F.: From there, they took them, I didn't see them for years, years. And how they found me after the war... And then we came, it was Passover, we just put away the Passover dishes, they came for us and take us away. They weren't there, my brothers. So when we came there, we didn't see each other no more. My parents and my little brother, he is here, he made me a picture, my grandson, and I recognise him when he was small. "Show her..." (speaking to grandson Robert F.)

Robert F.: The pictures of Simcha Weiss by Roman Vishniac.

M. H.: Yes.

R. F.: That is my little brother. He was younger than me. He was... I don't know, he started to go to school, he was twelve. Like that, we worked, we had a little garden, you know, before the house...

M. H.: Oh yeah.

R. F.: ... and my mother, she should rest in peace, would like peppers and corn and a lot of things, we should have vegetables... And you know, when you take of the corn, you do with flowers, you don't make it straight, you cut it this way... and she had a sister just across from us, and she went to visit her sister, and she cut her leg, you know, she was sick a long time...

M. H.: Yeah, ok and you were sent to Mukachevo in 1944?

R. F.: Yeah, to the ghetto, they took us.

M. H.: So, tell me more about this experience.

R. F.: In the ghetto? I was too small, you know, I never was before in a big city, so for me it was... but there was lot of people, lot of we didn't recognise...

M. H.: And the whole family was in there? Or just you...

R. F.: My whole family. Only those two brothers...

M. H.: Yes.

R. F.: ... that they weren't home. The third brother, he was very quiet, there were two friends of his, they said: "Come and let's run away." And my mother, she should rest in peace, said: "Oh no, you not, you gonna stay with us." And those two boys after three months were free. And my brother ...

M. H.: And how long you stayed in Mukachevo?

R. F.: A month.

M. H.: A month?

R. F.: Yes. And then they took us straight to Auschwitz.

M. H.: To Auschwitz?

R. F.: Yes. Birkenau.

M. H.: Birkenau.

R. F.: Yeah, and I worked there in nights, I worked there. What did I work? They gave me small valise I had to fill up with gold. If not they would kill you. That 's it. And I did... you looked all over, the shoulders and the shoes, you know... we used to go six o'clock at night and come home at six o'clock, at twelve o'clock we woke up and the music was plying, we had to march, you know, when we went to work.

M. H.: And do you remember the arrival to Auschwitz?

R. F.: Sure, yeah. My parents took... I don't remember, left, right. I remember when I stayed this way, I went left and I think they went right, I don't know.

M. H.: So you were separated?

R. F.: Yes, right away, right away.

M. H.: Right away.

R. F.: You know, I was young, I didn't know, they were passing around me and that is it, and I never saw them again. Never. And they took us into the room and they shaved our heads and they gave us a grey dress. I came out, we didn't, you know, like cousins, or whoever we were with, we didn't recognize each

other. And some of them went to work. We were sleeping in the bunks, fifteen girls in one bunk. We were sitting there, and Mengele used to come: "You go down, and you go down," with his stick, you know, "You go down", so they were right away killed, I think, I don't know. We didn't know why, and they said, that they take dark hair, so I had dark hair, very black hair, I was scared. And I heard he is coming, there was a window, I went through the window that they shouldn't take me. And I did very dirty work there, because we didn't go to the bathroom, you know, all of us, they were no like pots, and everybody went there, when it was full who was the last one to come had to go in the latrine to put it away. So I didn't care, I just was afraid from Mengele, you know, so I run away, I did it. Otherwise, I was there for eight months.

### M. H.: Eight months? And...

R. F.: And then, they took me to Auschwitz really, that was Birkenau, where I was... to Auschwitz and we worked by cabbage, to set the cabbage to grow. And everybody had... it was... full with water, how you called it? A Krüge, how you say krüge... like they were hiding also. Full with water. Because at night they shouldn't dry out the earth. So they were fighting so much for the lighter one, and heavier one, and I said...I was very quiet at home, so I said: "I am not fighting, whatever there is gonna be left over, I take," so I stayed. So the SS came, the SS women, and they hit me in the head, and all over, I was full of blood, she got scared herself, you know, she was not supposed to do that. Since then I have seizures. And at home, I didn't do nothing, we went to school, and after that we had fun, and we had Czech... like police, I forgot, how you call it, gendary? No, I don't know. In Czech, how do you call the police?

M. H.: Policie?

R. F.: You don't know Czech?

M. H.: Yeah, it's, it is almost the same.

R. F.: Jak?

M. H.: Police is policie.

R. F.: Like policie. We were such good friends, good neighbours, if they bought something for themselves for Christmas, they bought for me too, they had a daughter in my age, we were such a good friends, they cried when they took us away. Yeah, and we were very good friends, we shared with everything, really, very nice, and otherwise it was very nice life, but very poor life.

M. H.: Ok, and from Osvětim, you were sent to Bergen Belsen?

R. F.: No, no.

M. H.: How it was?

R. F.: From Auschwitz they took us to... one week we were in Bergen Belsen, one week ...

M. H.: One week?

R. F.: One week, from there we went, I don't know, nobody remembers those little towns... Rochlitz.

M. H.: Rochlitz.

R. F.: Did you hear about it?

M. H.: Maybe but it is not famous.

R. F.: Graslitz? Rochlitz, Graslitz, yeah. And we stayed there for a while...

M. H.: And how far away it was from Bergen Belsen this Rochlitz?

R. F.: I don't know how long they take us, some days, I think so. I don't remember. But from there... we stayed there, it was raining, pouring, and they let us stay outside, and I had one shoe from rubber, and one shoe from leather. One fell down and I had to take a schemata to not lose it at all, you know. So, then we went a month, we walked a month, whole month.

M. H.: Whole month?

R. F.: And they went inside, SS, and we stayed outside. They peeled potatoes inside, and then the peel they throw outside, we should fight for that. Yeah... but we did fight, everybody fight. Every morning, when we woke up, less and less, they were dead. Because they couldn't walk anymore. I don't know, I was a strong girl, I was strong. And then we were hiding there; a few girls left. And the train came, we were hiding, then came a man...

M. H.: And where were you hid...

R. F.: ... "Dětičky"...

M. H.: ... were you hid?

R. F.: In, where... How you call it?

Robert F.: A ditch?

R. F. A ditch, yes, like you put in things....

Robert F.: A hole?

R. F.: Hole, like a big hole...

Robert F.: In a field?

R. F.: In a field, yeah. So, we were there and the old man passed by: "Dětičky pojďte, pojďte. Už nemáme..."

M. H.: I understand.

R. F.: So, we didn't want to go, we were afraid. So, he says: "I am gonna bring the Burgermeister." We didn't know, what the Burgermeister is, but he came and he talked to us very nicely: "Come out, we gonna give you food."

M. H.: Oh yes, it was some village?

R. F.: Yeah, yeah, not far from Žatec.

M. H.: Not far from, aha, some small village near Žatec?

R. F.: Yes, and they took us... I don't know, what we had on our bodies, they took as on the attics and they washed us with petroleum. And they gave us clothes, and then the Russian Army came in and they brought us food and then they said: "Now you can come out, we have a lot of apartments here and you can take an apartment." We were nine girls. So, then we cooked and we baked and we took...there was an older girl than us, so she taught us what to do. And every day we went into Prague. On the big station and they gave food for the people who went home or went someplace else. And we invited them, there was a lot of stuff left in the houses, you know, because the people from there run away, so they took materials and bedding and suits and they went home.

M. H.: That's great.

R. F.: And we stayed on, then I started to work. I worked in a hospital.

M. H.: And how long did you stay there?

R. F.: In Žatec? I stayed there... Maybe, almost three years.

M. H.: Three years?

R. F.: Yes, because when one guy... he took stuff and he went home. And you know, there used to be a pump, to water at the station.

M. H.: Yeah, I know what do you mean.

R. F.: So, he says there to my brother: "Would you mind to pump for me a water and I'll do it for you?" He says: "Why not." So, then when he looks for my brother, he said: "You have a sister?" "Ah, my sister was too young. I am sure, she is not alive." "You are mistaken. She looks just like you and her name is Rivka." (smile)

M. H.: Oh!

R. F.: Yeah, so, he says: "Where does she live? If you talked, her name is Rivka." "She is in Žatec, near Prague." But they didn't understand... was two brothers. He says: "Žatec," so they thought that it is a street, Žatec, in Prague, so they looked for three days and they said: "No, he just bluffed..."

M. H.: So, they went to Žatecká street in Prague, probably, yes.

R. F.: Yeah and then they found an older man: "Do you know this street in Prague? He says: "I know Prague, but this is 60 kilometres from here, go there, and you find whoever you look for." And then he really found... it was a Friday, we cooked for Shabbos, you know, everything prepared. And once my brother... I didn't know them, my brother he came in, he says: "Is there Rivka, here, between you, girls?" And I was in the kitchen, wiping the glasses to prepare, nice. I said: "I am Rivka. And who are you?" "You don't recognise me?" "No, I don 't know, who are you?" And he says: "I am your brother." And I had a glass in my hand and I broke my glass. I started to cry: "Who?" "I am Zvi, your brother." And then he says: "Go outside, there is an another present for you." And there was my other brother. So, we took another apartment and we lived there for a while. And I went to work in the hospital there. People found me, in Israel...we lived in Israel for eleven years. They found me there, they looked at me, they hold me: "I thank you so much, if not you maybe we wouldn't be alive!" I saw them hungry and I worked in the kitchen and I brought them more food, you know. And then my brother got married and then the other. And one sisterin-law was there, and they said: "How long we gonna stay there?" There was no more young people there. They sent us away with a kibbutz...

M. H.: Aha, so ... It was in hachsara?

R. F.: ...in kibbutz from...Yes and we went to Israel.

M. H.: Yeah, but it was in Prague?

R. F.: ...That was in Žatec.

M. H.: Žatec first and then in Prague?

R. F.: And then we came to Prague with them, and there from Prague we went away to Germany, Holtzhausen maybe. And we lived by nuns. They said we should come and we can live there. They had a big, big house and they had cows and they had... We lived by them for a year time, I think, they were very nice. But we cooked, I have pictures, when I am a cook there.

M. H.: Really? You have to show me.

R. F.: Where did I...

M. H.: Yes, after the interview is finished, you will show me then.

R. F.: We stayed there for a while and then we wanted to go to Israel, that was all our, you know... so we went one night here, one night there, till we came to Hamburg. Hamburg, they made an Exodus, you know, from the woods and everything. So they said, that they are going to Israel. "Oooo, we are going to Israel. I am going to Israel, too." So we all went with that ship. You hear about that ship? Exodus...

M. H.: Yes.

R. F.: We were about four thousand five hundred kids there and we came to Haifa in a mile and they did not let us in.

M. H.: And what happed then?

R. F.: Then they took, they had their cruisers, the English, they put us on their cruisers, they took us back to Hamburg, for three months on the water. I had one dress only, and from the salt water it was falling apart. I was sitting in one place, by us was a tall guy, his name was Horowitz, I remember like today, and I said: "Can I have your jackets? I have to go to the bathroom." I was sitting on the deck, you know, so he says: "Sure." They used to give us crackers, and then we went through France and they gave us their breads and they said: "Don't go down! Maybe they take you back." And we came to Hamburg again, there they let us down, and they also made us ...

M. H.: So, you were in such... So, you were in such a camp or?

R. F.: Yes, like a camp. We got scared again, you know, what is this?! So, for three four days, they were there and then we woke up in the morning, nobody is there already, so came the Hagana and started to, to teach us how to shoot, how to this...

M. H. Yeah.

R. F.: ... in Israel. And I run too. (smile) And then we went to Israel, back. Then Begin became, Menachem Begin, he became... in 1948, then came Israel. So, I came there, they teach us ready to go to army. But I said: "No." They used to say if a girl goes to the Army she is going to have a baby. I said: "What will I do with that?" I didn't... we didn 't know, like today, a twelve-year old girl knows everything, you know, we didn 't know nothing. I was from my family and they

didn't teach us nothing yet, you know. So, I said I am not going in army. So, somebody came... I was hiding under bed, three couples had a room, one room, and when they fell asleep, I went under the bed and I slept there. Before they woke up, I was out. (smile) After three days came somebody, he said: "Who wants to go in a kibbutz?" I was the first: "I am going in the kibbutz!" In kibbutz, they said, no man is in the kibbutz, so it is very hard work here, and we didn't mind. I worked by bananas, you know, you had to cut off the leaves, that the sun should come to the bananas. Everybody works in the different places, so I had after a week or two, I worked by babies, you know. A lot of babies there and there wasn't pampers yet... (smile) Then at the end, I came in the kitchen. I was a kitchen girl.

M. H.: So, in the kitchen again.

R. F.: Yes, and then, after a year, my cousin told me: "Come out, you don't get paid," nothing, just the food and the clothes, you have, shorts, pants and long pants, and the sandals, that's all.

M. H.: And where you happy there? I mean, ...

R. F.: I worked very hard, very hard. So, if she said I can make money, and I can get a job...But I came out and I couldn't get a job, no money...

M. H.: It was hard, yeah.

R. F.: ... and they didn't have food either, I didn't neither. I went kilometres for a piece of bread and I didn't get it and I came back and somebody, who was a baker, he give me a piece of bread and I was crying: "Why did I go out of the kibbutz?! I had what to eat." But then my cousin said: "You will find." I found a place, after few months I found a place, with four little tables outside... Were you in Israel?

M. H.: Not yet.

R. F.: You should go.

M. H.: Yeah!

R. F.: Now it is different also like then in 1948. And there was an elderly couple and I had to clean up the house first and to wash the clothes and then I came down to be, you know, hostess for the people who came to eat there. And I got fifteen pfunds a month. So, the first fifteen pfunds a month I gave to my brother, he just came from Žatec there. And he came with a baby already, so I said: "Ok, I help him." And the second month I gave him just ten, for five I bought for

myself sandals. So, but I said: "I don't have nothing here, I don't have nothing in kibbutz. Maybe I will go back." But my cousin: "No, no, no, don't go." So then, I found a job, paid a little more and for my money, I could buy food there to eat. But it was very expensive. So, I said... I had one cousin here, another one..."I ask her, maybe she would cook me a supper, I pay her." So, I paid her eleven pfunds for month and I ate every night the same thing — a whole week. But I didn't care, I had something to eat.

M. H.: Sure.

R. F.: Yeah and then, you know, time passed by, and I found my husband.

M. H.: Oh yeah.

R. F.: So, in 1950 I got married.

M. H.: In 1950, you got married, aha.

R. F.: 1951, I had my older son and four years later, I had my other son. And in the beginning, it was also very hard, you know, because...They grabbed my husband, I didn't even know, where he went, for three weeks I didn't see him.

M. H.: Really?

R. F.: We didn't know, where he is. But I had a neighbour, very nice neighbour, so she...

M. H.: And where you stayed at that time?

R. F.: We had like a bunker.

M. H.: Bunker?

R. F.: We had like a basement, you know, under the house, so we were in there, if the house fall down, we gonna fall down too. So, we stayed there for a while. And then, when the war ended, took a long time... there is never end, even now, never gonna be end. So, my husband was a baker and he started to make nice money, and we bought a little house, that was in Haifa where we lived and then we went to live in Kiryat Ata. And we lived there till we came here.

M. H.: Oh, yes. Did you start to feel as an Israeli?

R. F.: Oh yeah...Even now, if I go there, I have to have an Israeli passport, do you know?

M. H.: So, tell me more about the identity? How did you feel before war? As Jewish or...?

R. F.: Sure, I was, you know...

M. H.: You spoke Czech and then you came to Israel...and finally, you are living in the US. So, tell me more about this.

R. F.: Yeah. Then, a friend of ours: "Come, come, you gonna make here money!" Bla bla bla. Maybe, but my husband went to the union, and he made very little, like another. I began to work, but then I was sick, from the S.S. guard hitting, they hit me in my head.

M. H.: Yeah. And tell me about your arrival to the US?

R. F.: Yeah.

M. H.: Tell me this story.

R. F.: I am here fifty years.

M. H.: Yeah, so it was 1959? Or?

R. F.: 1965. And my children live in Long Island and I live here and my other son lives in the Lower East Side.

M. H.: Yeah.

R. F.: And I live by myself.

M. H.: Yeah. It is great! And tell me what was your first impression from New York when you came? Did you go through Elis Island? Or? How you ...

R. F.: No, no.

M. H.: So, tell me more about.

R. F.: We came with the ship.

M. H.: With the ship?

R. F.: Yes... few weeks it was. But you weren't allowed to go out, everybody, even if you had a house, if you had anything. Twenty dollars for everybody. No more, you weren't allowed to go out. In Israel, we wouldn't make more money. So, what we had, we sold the house. So, we had eighty dollars. We were four people. So, for the rest of the money we bought jewellery, things for the kids, a neckless, a few months later robbed us and took everything. (smile) Yeah. And since then, we live here. I had beautiful little house and we had trees there, we have a garden, my husband made beautiful things, you know. I am sorry, I am sorry, all my life I am gonna be sorry.

M. H.: And when you compare the years spent in Israel and the years here, can you compare it?

R. F.: I went there, I went there for a few times.

M. H.: Ok, so you are coming back to Israel regularly?

R. F.: Yes, I go and I come, because I have there a brother. God, really, should keep him longer. He became now ninety-three years old.

M. H.: Ok. Who you are? Are you American or...

R. F.: I don't know....

M. H.: You don't know?

R. F.: No, no, no...

M. H.: You can't say?

R. F.: I am a Jewish, that's all.

M. H.: Yeah.

R. F.: And I live here, Borough Park is very Jewish, you know. And I have here very religious people, not that they criticize me. They have children and they call me "Babi". You know, what is babi?

M. H.: Yeah, babi, babička. Sure. It is very nice.

R. F.: And I have a friend across ... We were so many, we used to go to Florida. We had... oh, fifteen couples when I went there. Now maybe two were left. All passed away. And I have a friend across the street... but it is hard, it's hard to live that somebody... we used to go to Florida. She called me up two days: "I go, I go," she said. "I look for that address, telephone," she cannot see good, "but I found out that I had to call you, you were like my sister." So, she said: "Who is left?" I said: "Almost nobody." I have a sister-in-law here, my brother passed away; they took him to Israel. And that's it. No family. And home, you know what? How poor we were. We were happy, we were happy there, let's say, we were young, we came from school, we put under bedding suit and there was mills, you know, they make the... wheat, for flour. And we went under, not with the electric. And we were learning how to swim by ourselves, and we were swimming and going in the forest, you know, it was nice. Then we had strawberries and all kind of... We were happy, we don't know better.

M. H.: Yeah.

R. F.: For us it was nice. I never went to a big city, I didn't hear how we was, once a week came a bus, went to Išava, then to Mukachevo. But I never went, I never cared, I was too young to think about those things. The people were

happy there, however, we didn't sleep...not everybody had one bed, we slept two in three, me ...special girl, I slept with my mother, but the boys, they slept three boys in one bed.

M. H.: In one bed!

R. F.: Yes, it was different.

M. H.: So, ok. Thank you very much and is there something you want to add more or you can tell me what you want more?

R. F.: I would like once to go to Prague! I really want because it bothers me that I was there maybe fifty times for sure... and just by the station.

M. H.: You have to go there. Your grandson will take you there.

R. F.: I hope, I hope.

M. H.: You will make a trip.

R. F.: You know because it's an old city, right, they didn't make too much over, did they?

M. H.: How do you mean that? Yeah, it's old city but ...it's modern. Yeah. I am sure, you will like it.

R. F.: I am sure I will. It would bring a lot of memories back.

M. H.: Sure, sure.

R. F.: A lot of time, when I walked around like, I sing the Czech songs.

M. H.: Yeah, ok. So, thank you very much.

I was very happy that the JMP had taken the time to interview Safta even though she now lives in the United States. I appreciated that the staff at the JMP had shown an interest in Safta and assisted me in my commitment to pass along my grandparents' stories to the next generation.

It is because of my continued commitment, that shortly after the interview with Safta, I began to collaborate with the staff of the JMP to establish the From Generation To... Interview Project. The mission of the Project is to provide long term funding to the JMP's Oral History Collection to conduct and transcribe oral history interviews with survivors of the Holocaust.

Sam Wall had designed the logo for the Project:



The logo was based on the following photograph of Safta and I:



In both the photograph and logo, Safta and I are lighting memorial candles for the six million (6,000,000) Jewish lives that were lost during the Holocaust. There are six candles, as each candle represents one million lives.

In the logo, I am depicted as a teenager; it was during this time that I began to write the poetry contained in this book. Additionally, in the logo, Safta is depicted as a teenager with a shaved head and a tattoo on her arm. Safta, was a teenager when she and her family arrived at Auschwitz, had her hair shaved, was given the tattoo "A-6492" on her left arm and was made to wear a camp uniform.

Through my work with the JMP, I hope to keep the flame (shown in both the photograph and the logo) and the memories of the victims alive.

I am honored that the JMP had introduced the Project in their April 2015 Newsletter article, "The Oral history collection of the Jewish Museum in Prague one year on".

As a resident of the Village of Valley Stream (Nassau County), New York, I wanted to inform my community of my ongoing efforts to document my grandparents' stories. I reached out to my local newspaper, *Valley Stream Herald* and spoke to the Editor at the time, Micah Danney; he agreed to interview Safta and I for an article. I am grateful for this very special, featured article, "Author honors grandmother's life and legacy". *(following page)* 



### The oral history collection of the Jewish Museum in Prague one year on

April 2015

Since 1990 the Jewish Museum in Prague (JMP) has been systematically developing its oral history collection so as to help preserve the Jewish legacy of the 20th century. Most of the people we have recorded interviews with were born in Czechoslovakia. Some spent their whole lives in this country while others were forced to emigrate. Some were religious Jews while others saw their Jewishness more as a respect for Jewish traditions, whether they were aware of their Jewish identity from childhood or whether they found out about it only with the introduction of the anti-Jewish laws of the Nazi Protectorate and with their subsequent persecution. Our focus is not only on how Jews died, but actually on how they lived. We are interested not only in their own biographies, but also in the experiences of their family members, what it was like for them at home, how they spent their leisure time and how they celebrated holidays - in other words, their day-to-day lives against the background of major historical events. Each story is different, each testimony is equally important. At present we have a collection of more than 1,300 interviews, which is thelargest of its kind in the Czech Republic and the most widely used by researchers in this country. We believe that it is important to preserve Jewish memory and to establish the Jewish experience as part of Czech collective memory. Where possible, we try to obtain testimonies from several generations of the same family. The Jewish experience in the latter half of the 20th century is a topic that has not yet been sufficiently researched or presented in a historiographical way. With the support of Robert B. Fried from Long Island, NY, in a joint project ("From Generation To...Interview Project"), we were able to record as many as 75 interviews with survivors living in the Czech Republic and abroad over the course of 11 months in 2015; we made 2000 digital copies of photographs and documents from the family archives. Robert B. Fried financed the recording of 20 interviews and also funded our last trip to Israel to meet narrators. Robert B. Fried is grandson of four survivors, his paternal grandparents were born in Czechoslovakia. "We have reached a critical time,

where now more than ever before, we have the ability to utilize technology and multimedia to document the stories of the diminishing survivor population. The power of one's story in one's voice, will help to educate this generation and the next generation, and so on...It is because of this, that I have chosen to and will continue to provide long term support of JMP's Oral History Collection," adds Robert B. Fried, also the author of a book of poetry about the Holocaust, From Generation To... published in 2013 by Wingspan Press.

We are continuing to work on the audio and video recordings, transcribing each interview, editing the written text and sending it to the narrator for authorization. We have a great deal of respect for our interviewees and so we fully respect their decision how to use their testimonies. Our oral history collection is available to professional and lay researchers, and the testimonies are also used in the production of educational materials for students and teachers, aswell as for our publications and exhibitions. When recording interviews we also collect archival materials, such as photographs and documents from the family archives of interviewees. So far this year we have produced digital copies of 1,700 archival materials, some of which we have received in their original form.



# Valley Stream HERALD

## Author honors grandmother's life and legacy

Local man works to document Holocaust survivors' stories

JANUARY 7-13, 2016 By Micah Danney

Robert Fried grew up hearing about his grandmother's suffering and survival during the Holocaust. In 2013, he published a book of poems he wrote about her when he was a boy, and is now dedicated to honoring her experience and all of the victims by helping to document more survivors' stories.

"I was always asked as a kid, Why would you want to write such depressing poetry?" said Fried, 37. "I said, 'Well, this is what my interest is.' And 25 years later, I wrote a book that is in museums all around the world."

The book, "From Generation To..." is a collection of poems Fried wrote between the ages of 10 and 17. They are based on his imaginings of the accounts he heard from his grandmother, Rebecca Fried, 85, whose family was sent to concentration camps from their home in Czechoslovakia when the Nazis took control. Rebecca was imprisoned at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Illustrations in Fried's book recreate poignant scenes that stuck out to him as a boy, like one of a Nazi SS guard speaking to a young Rebecca, who had asked where her parents were. The guard is pointing toward the smoke rising from a smokestack in the background. "Basically, 'This is where they are,'" Fried said. "They're up in the clouds."

The book has been added to the collections at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., the library at Yad Vashem in Israel, the Jewish Museum in

Manhattan.

Gathering information comes naturally to Fried, a forensic scientist works who with evidence. digital He helped arrange documentation 2012 of his grand mother's



experience aboard the famous SS Exodus, the ship filled with Jewish refugees that attempted to land in British Mandatory Palestine, or present-day Israel, in 1947, only to be sent back to Germany by the British.

Fried also helped Rebecca formally identify her brother, Simcha, after she noticed the 12-year-old in a Czechoslovakian photographer's pre-war photo that was published in a magazine several years ago. Fried worked with the International Center of Photography to officially identify the boy. Simcha died in a Nazi gas chamber. He was one of Rebecca's four brothers. Another died one month before he would have been liberated, shot by a German guard when he could no longer walk. Two brothers survived.

Most recently, Fried provided financial support for an ongoing project by the Jewish Museum in Prague to document survivors' stories. Dozens of interviews have been recorded.

Fried described his commitment to honoring



A teenaged Rebecca Fried after she was liberated from a Nazi concentration camp.

the experience of his grandmother and others like her as a privilege that his parents were denied. "My parents always told us that they didn't have grandparents," he said.

For Fried's father, Alex, of Levittown, delving into the family's tragic past is a noble endeavor best left to his son. "My mother raised me," Alex said, "so I have a more direct, intense relationship, whereas Rob is one generation removed, so he can take a different outlook and be more informative."

Alex remembered caring for his mother in the evenings of his childhood, when his father would leave to work the night shift at a bakery. Rebecca suffered seizures due to a blow to the head from a female SS guard when she was 14. In that way and others, the Holocaust reached from the past to impact Alex's life, and his mother's trauma became his.

For Rebecca, who lives in Brooklyn, her grandson's interest has provided her the opportunity to tell her story in a way that will be preserved, and the process has taught her things about what was going on beyond her personal experience. She noted that other survivors she has talked to prefer not to talk about their experiences, but she wants to. "I want people to know," she said.

Seventy years after she was liberated, the dark memories she carries don't prevent her from



Rebecca was tattooed with an identification number at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

finding happiness. She finds it in her family, and especially in her great-grandchild, Rob's infant son, Aaron.

"I look at him and he smile to me. I could just eat him up," Rebecca said in a thick accent. "That's my life. That's my heart."



Rebecca and her great-grandson, Aaron Fried.

In April 2017, I reached out to the JMP to see if they would like to include a few words about he From Generation To... Interview Project. I am so honored to have received this personal letter from the JMP Director, Leo Pavlát. May we have many more years of collaboration together.



Prague, 24 April, 2017

Dear Mr. Fried,

I hope this letter finds you well. It is my pleasure to enclose below a statement on your kind support for the purposes of your book.

Cooperation with Robert B. Fried is very important to the Jewish museum in Prague. He regularly supports our oral history activities, and thanks to his support, we were able to record dozens more interviews than usual.

We would like to express our gratitude to Robert B. Fried for making a significant contribution to such an important project.

With best wishes

Leo Pavlát

Director



#### THERE WILL ALWAYS BE QUESTIONS

My family is so blessed to have Safta in our life. She is such an inspiration to everyone she meets. At 89 years old, she still tells stories of the past (including names and dates as if it was yesterday) and passes along her wisdom to guide us into the future. As a child, I asked her many questions. As an adult, I am fortunate to be able to ask her questions; the difference now, is that I have a better understanding and a greater appreciation for her answers. Here is a small glimpse into the wisdom of Safta. These are questions that I had asked of her during one of our recent conversations:

#### Why do you light Shabbos candles each Friday night?

Because I am shomer Shabbos. Everyone who is married, they all light candles. I keep up the tradition.

#### Why do you stay religious after everything you went through?

My parents were religious, my grandparents were religious. I want to keep that alive. I hope that my grand grandchildren will be happier and religious too. Even though I will be in the other world, I am going to see to it and pray for them to be happy in their life and healthy and don't forget me.

# What do you want to share with others about your experiences during the Holocaust?

I went through so much. Everybody wondered how I stayed alive. I was on the Exodus too and I lived through it.

#### What are your wishes for the next generation, your great grandchildren?

I am the happiest grand grandmother; that I lived to have grand grandchildren. Their futures should be healthy and happy. They should have good jobs, open their own businesses and they should have enough for their own kinder (Yiddish for children). They shouldn't have to work so hard like their fathers or mothers. I am the happiest person to have lived to see my grand grandchildren, Alana and Aaron. G-d should bless them.

Love

Tafta

## **PHOTOS OF TRIUMPH**

### **Keeping Tradition Alive**



Safta lighting Shabbos candles in her apartment in Borough Park, a neighborhood of Brooklyn, NY, where she has lived for the last 58 years.

#### Pure Nachas



Safta dancing with me on my wedding day, September 07, 2014, to the song, "My Yiddishe Mama".



Safta enjoying a very special moment with her great grandson Aaron. The joy that resonates in this photo is something that words cannot describe.



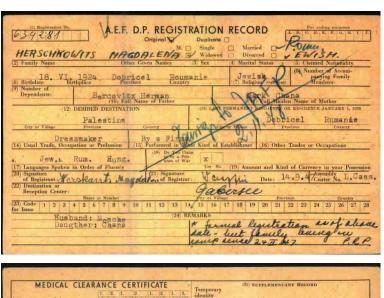
Safta with her two great grandchildren, Alana Paige Fried (age 15) and Aaron Gabriel Fried (age 17 months) at her 89th birthday celebration with family on April 30, 2017 (her birthday is May 01).

#### **POST-WAR DOCUMENTS**

The following documents were obtained via the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection. These documents provide insight into my grandparents' journey after the Holocaust. Please note that the spelling of my grandparents' names and their dates of birth may vary in the documents.

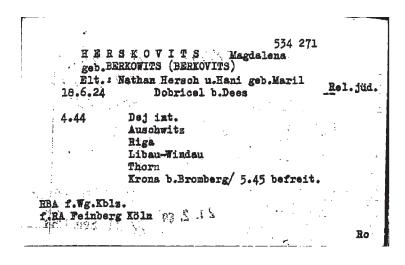
#### Magdalena (Berkovits) Herskowitz

1. An Allied Expeditionary Force Displaced Persons Registration Record for Magdalena Herschkowits (September 14, 1947). Magdalena's husband, Mosche, and eldest daughter, Chana, appear on the bottom left of the Record:



at 2nd (25) Dates of Disinfestation	NCE CERTIFICATE  1.   2.   1.   2.   1.   2  D. D. T.   AL, SM, K.   HNAT.  Types	1.  2. OTHER	Temporary identity certificate ::
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2. A record of an inquiry from the Regional Restitution Office in Koblenz to the International Tracing Service:



3. A record of an inquiry from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany to the International Tracing Service (1993):

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T/D :
Kartennummer : 1319930923024 Kennummer: 000000 53422/
Name
               : HERSCHKOVITS
                                             Magdalena
Name2
               : BERKOWICZ
Name3
Geb/Tarnname
Ehefrau/-mann:
Eltern
Geburtsdatum : 18.6.1924 / Ort:
Religion : Nationalität:
                                          Ort: Dobricel (Kisdebrek)
religion : Nationalitat:
44-4.45 Gh. Dees, KL Auschwitz, Riga-Kaiserwald,
    Libau Thorn, Bromberg, Krone.
Eingangedatum : 30.08.93
Antrageteller : Claims Conference Article 2 Fund
Straße : 15 East 26 Street
Plz/Wohnort : 10010 New York, NY
Land: USA
Datum/Namensr.: 23.09.93 ASt
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#### **Moshe Herskowitz**

4. An Allied Expeditionary Force Assembly Center Displaced Persons Registration Record for Mosche Herschkowits (September 14, 1947). Mosche's wife, Magdalena, and eldest daughter, Chana, appear on the bottom left of the Record:

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a. Jew. b. Rum. Hum	(15) Performed in What Kind of E	stablishmet (16) Other 7	rades or Occupations
(17) Languages Spoken in Order of Fluence (20) Signature of Registrant Honskow 17			of Currency in your Possession
(22) Destination of Reception Center: Name or Number	Peci	ecretic Provin	te Conntry
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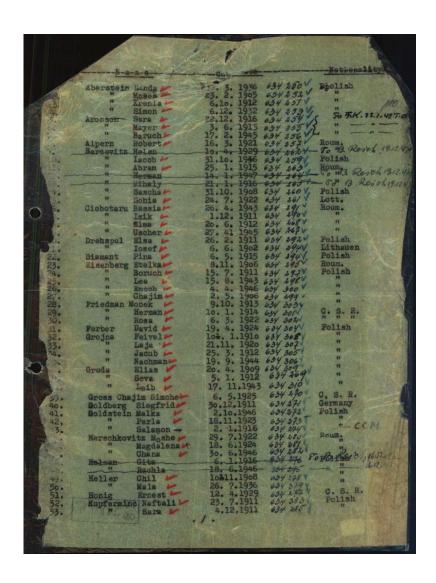
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Date	Dute
Medical Examiner	M. R. Medical Examiner
(20) MOVEMENT AUTHORIZATION OR V-18A	(9) RECEPTION CENTRE BECOM
	/V

5. An Allied Expeditionary Force Assembly Center Registration Card for Moshe Herskovits:

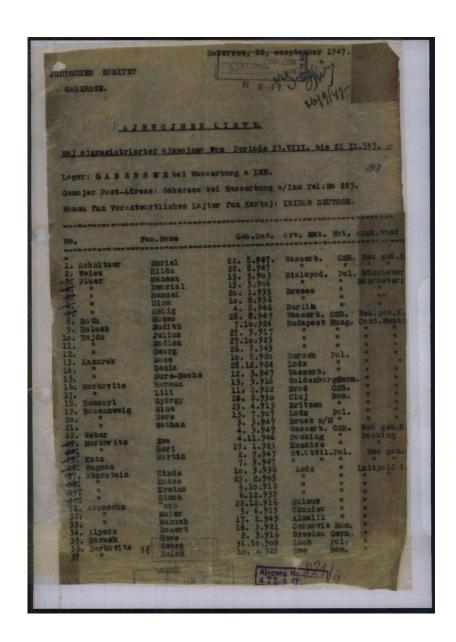
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L Gregistration number	M. F. 29, 7. 224. Ds	110.1	ž
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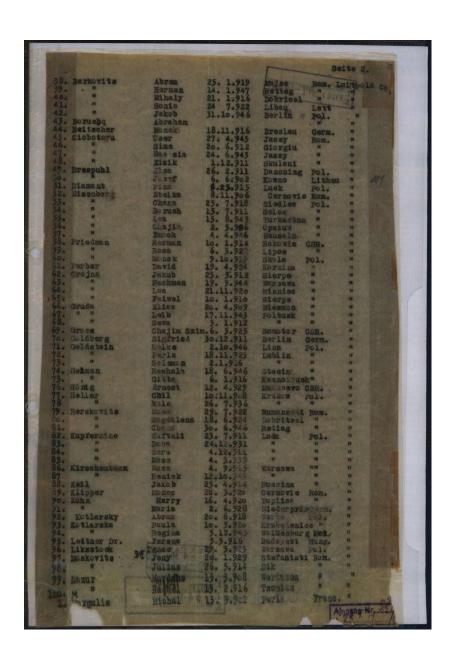
6. Moshe Herschkovitz, followed by his wife, Magdalena, and eldest daughter, Chana, on a list of displaced persons at displaced persons camp, Gabersee:



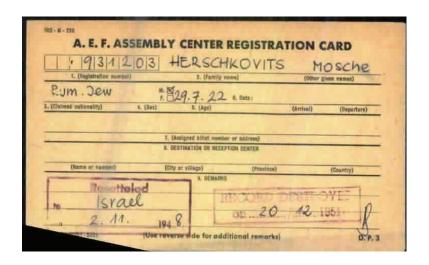
7. A list of displaced persons at the displaced persons camp, Gabersee (September 22, 1947):

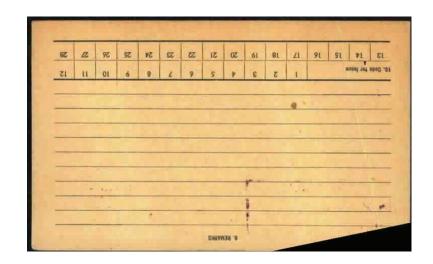


8. Moss Herskovits, followed by his wife, Magdalena, and eldest daughter, Chana, on a list of displaced persons at the displaced persons camp at Gabersee (September 22, 1947):

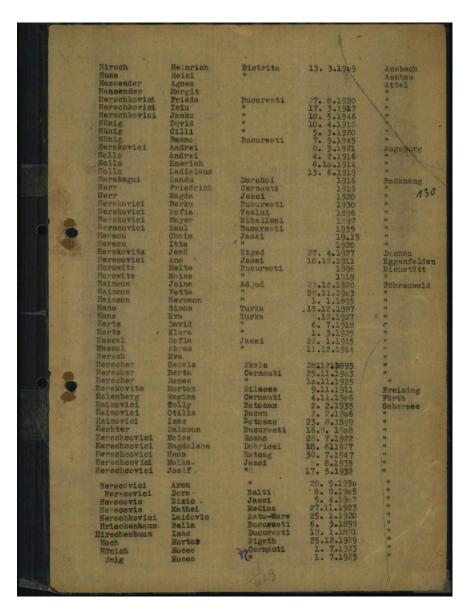


9. An Allied Expeditionary Force Assembly Center Registration Card for Mosche Herschkovits:

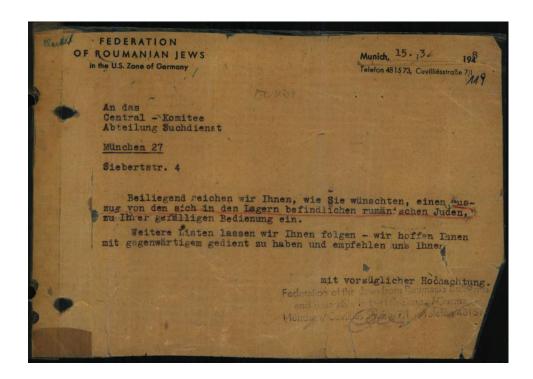




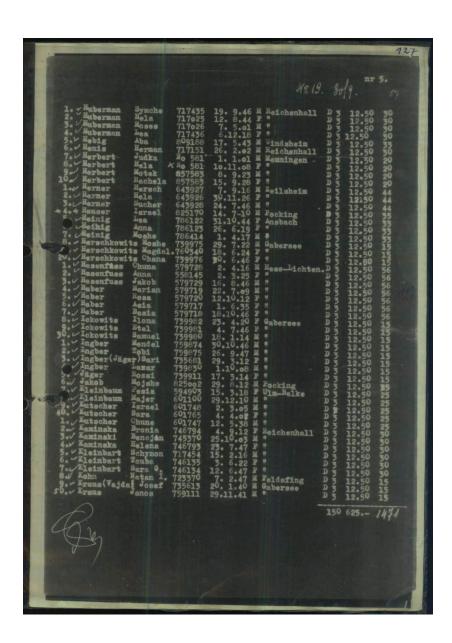
10. Moise Herschcovici, followed by his wife, Magdalena and eldest daughter Hana, on a list of Romanian Jews in the U.S. Zone of Germany (March 15, 1948):



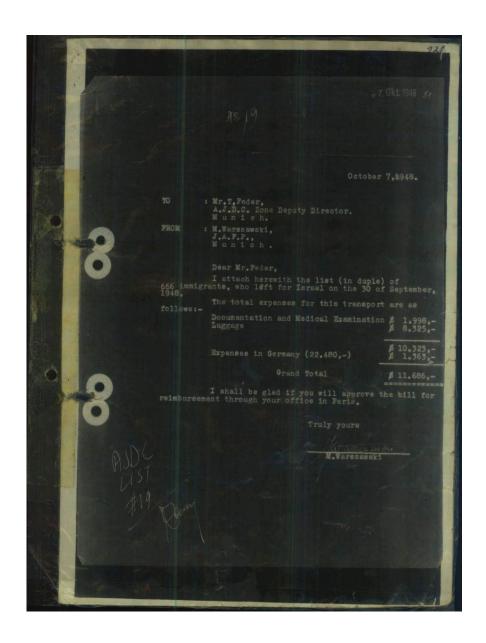
11. The correspondence accompanying the list of Romanian Jews in the U.S. Zone of Germany (March 15, 1948):



12. Moshe Herschkowits is listed on this page followed by his wife, Magdalena and eldest daughter, Chana, on a list of Jews who left Germany for Israel by rail (September 30, 1948):



13. The correspondence accompanying the list of Jews who left Germany for Israel by rail (September 30, 1948):



14. A record of an inquiry from the Regional Restitution Office in Koblenz to the International Tracing Service:

551 820

H E R S K O W I T Z Moshe
Elt.Adolf & Rosa Rel.jued.

29.6.22 Szalmarpatak

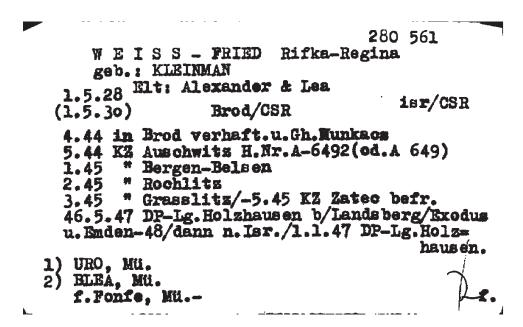
1.10.43 Nagybanya u.Oradna
1.1.44 Maidanek
1.2.44 Dolin
1.5.44 Stanislau
1.11.44 Nagyzöllös
1.11.44 Marsch, befr.

RBA f.Wg.Koblenz
f/Feinberg

BG

#### Rifka (Weiss) Fried

15. Requests from the United Restitution Organization in Munich and the Bavarian State Compensation Office, also in Munich, to the International Tracing Service:



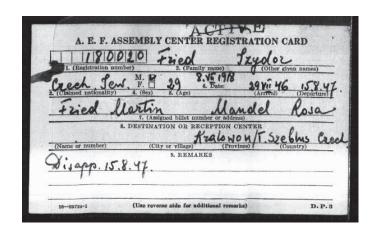
# **Israel Fried**

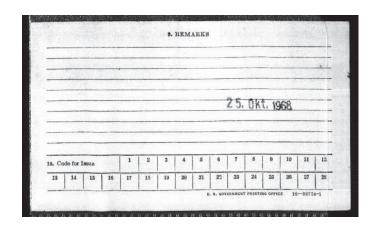
16. An Allied Expeditionary Force Assembly Center Registration Card for Israel Fried:

A. E. F. AS	SEMBLY CENTER REGIS	STRATION CARD
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(ZECH-Jeu 3. (Claimed nationality)	M. P 22 10	29.1.47 (Arrival) (Departure)
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17. An Allied Expeditionary Force Assembly Center Registration Card for Izydor Fried:



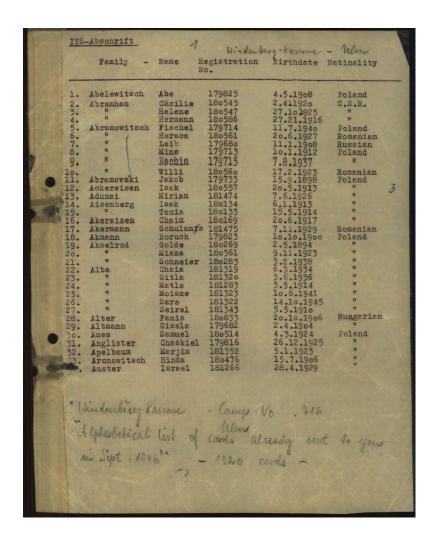


18. An Allied Expeditionary Force Displaced Persons Registration Record for Izydor Fried:

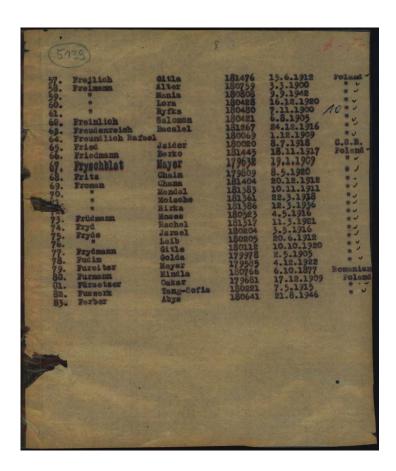
(1) PLEGISTRATION NO. A.E.F. D.P. REGISTRATION RECORD	
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(9) Number of Dependents: FRIEO MARTIN MANDEL ROSA	
(10) Full Name of Father (11) Full Maiden Name of Mother (12) Desired Lestination (13) Last Permanent Residence or Residence January 1	1000
(12) DESIRED LESTINATION (13) LAST PERMANENT RESIDENCE OR RESIDENCE JANUARY 1	, 1938.
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City or Village Province Country City or Village Province Country	
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(17) Languages Spoken in Order of Fluency  Yes No (19), Amount and Kind of Currency in your Position (20) Signature  (21) Signature	session
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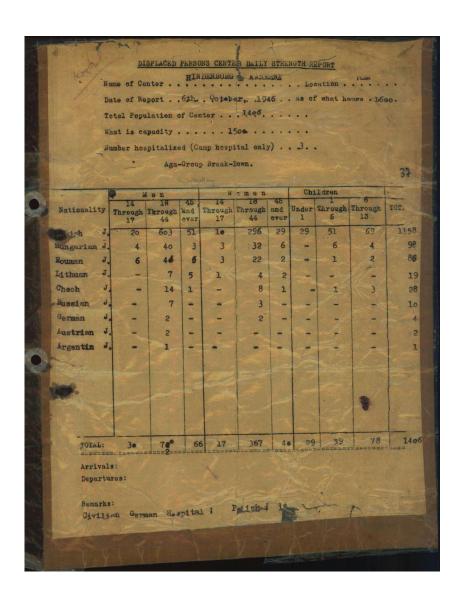
19. A list of residents at the displaced persons camp, Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm:



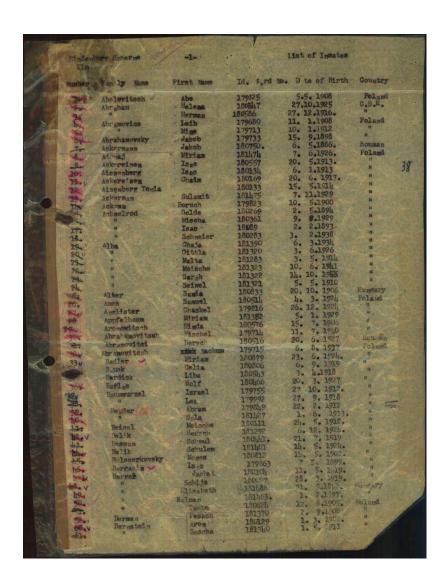
20. Jsidor Fried is on a list of residents at the displaced persons camp, Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm:



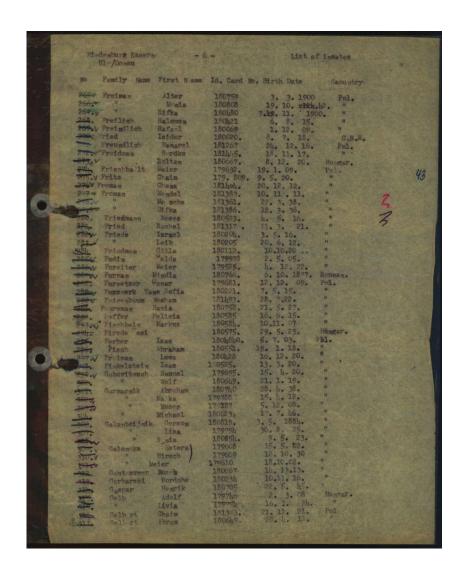
21. A list of residents at the displaced persons camp, Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm:



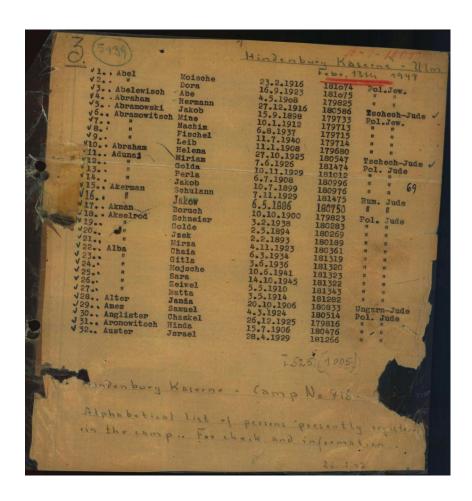
22. A list of residents at the displaced persons camp, Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm:



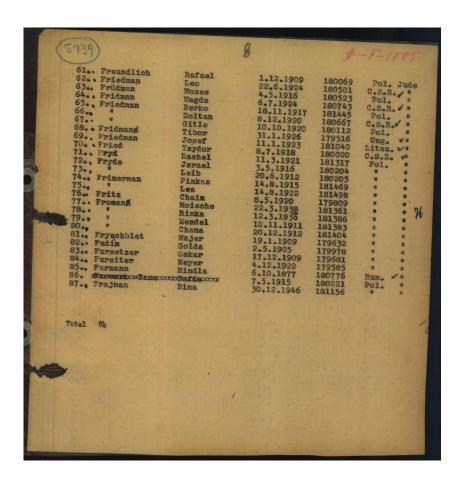
23. Isidor Fried is on a list of residents at the displaced persons camp, Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm:



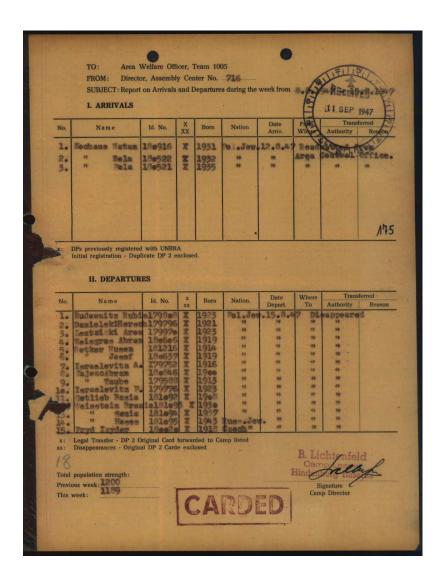
24. A list of residents at the displaced persons camp, Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm:



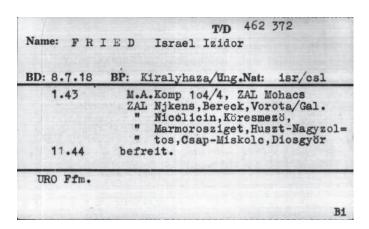
25. Ysydor Fried is on a list of residents at the displaced persons camp, Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm:



26. Izydor Fryd is on a list of displaced persons who departed from the displaced persons camp, Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm (August 15, 1947):



27. A record of an inquiry from the United Restitution Organization in Frankfurt am Main to the International Tracing Service:



#### **CITATIONS**

- 1. Magdalena Herschkowits, Allied Expeditionary Force Displaced Persons Registration Record, as in DP 2 Card File, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.1., document no. 67349000.
- 2. ITS record of inquiry from the Regional Restitution O ce, Koblenz, as in the Central Name Index, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, document no. 24578640.
- 3. ITS record of inquiry from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, 1993, as in the Central Name Index, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, document no. 53704535.
- Mosche Herschkowits, Allied Expeditionary Force Assembly Center Displaced Persons Registration Record, 14 September 1947, as in DP 2 Card File, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.1., document no. 67349217.
- 5. Moshe Herskovits, Allied Expeditionary Force Assembly Center Registration Card, as in DP 2 Card File, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.1., document no. 67349215.
- Undated list of Displaced Persons at DP camp Gabersee, as in DP Registration Lists of DP Camps, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.2., folder 127, page 168, document no. 81984767.
- 7. List of Displaced Persons at DP camp Gabersee, 22 September 1947, as in DP Registration Lists of DP Camps, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.2., folder 127, page 176, document no. 81984776.

- 8. List of Displaced Persons at DP camp Gabersee, 22 September 1947, as in DP Registration Lists of DP Camps, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.2., folder 127, page 177, document no. 81984777.
- 9. Mosche Herschkovits, Allied Expeditionary Force Assembly Center Registration Card, as in DP 2 Card File, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.1., document no. 67349216.
- List of Romanian Jews in the U.S. Zone of Germany, 15 March 1948, as in Registration of Liberated Former Persecutees at Various Locations (F18 lists), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.3., document no. 78789989.
- 11. Correspondence accompanying list of Romanian Jews in the U.S. Zone of Germany, 15 March 1948, as in Registration of Liberated Former Persecutees at Various Locations (F18 lists), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.3., folder 104, page 119, document no. 78789978.
- 12. List of Jews who left Germany for Israel by rail, 30 September 1948, as in Registration of Liberated Former Persecutees at Various Locations (F18 lists), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.3., folder 214, page 127, document no. 78811530.
- 13. Correspondence accompanying list of Jews who left Germany for Israel by rail, 30 September 1948, as in Registration of Liberated Former Persecutees at Various Locations (F18 lists), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.3., folder 214, page 121, document no. 78811524.
- 14. ITS record of inquiry from the Regional Restitution O ce, Koblenz, as in the Central Name Index, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, document no. 24576899.
- 15. "Weiss-Fried Rifka-Regina," as in the Central Name Index, United States

- Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, document no. 48954902.
- 16. "Fried, Israel, A.E.F. Assembly Center Registration Card," as in the Central Name Index, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, document no. 65519922.
- 17. "Fried, Izydor, A.E.F. Assembly Center Registration Card," as in the Central Name Index, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, document no. 65519923.
- 18. "Fried, Izydor, A.E.F. D.P. Registration Record," 29 August 1946, as in the Central Name Index, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, document no. 67093381.
- 19. List of residents at DP Camp Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm, as in DP Registration Lists of DP Camps, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.2., folder 316, page 3, document no. 82034051.
- 20. List of residents at DP Camp Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm, as in DP Registration Lists of DP Camps, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.2., folder 316, page 10, document no. 82034058.
- 21. List of residents at DP Camp Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm, as in DP Registration Lists of DP Camps, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.2., folder 316, page 39, document no. 82034088.
- 22. List of residents at DP Camp Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm, as in DP Registration Lists of DP Camps, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.2., folder 316, page 40, document no. 82034089.
- List of residents at DP Camp Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm, as in DP Registration Lists of DP Camps, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.2., folder 316,

- page 45, document no. 82034094.
- 24. List of residents at DP Camp Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm, as in DP Registration Lists of DP Camps, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.2., folder 316, page 72, document no. 82034121.
- 25. List of residents at DP Camp Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm, as in DP Registration Lists of DP Camps, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.2., folder 316, page 79, document no. 82034128.
- 26. List of Displaced Persons who departed DP Camp Hindenburg Kaserne in Ulm, 15 August 1947, as in DP Registration Lists of DP Camps, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, 3.1.1.2., folder 317, page 73, document no. 82034232.
- 27. ITS record of inquiry from the United Restitution Organization, Frankfurt am Main, as in the Central Name Index, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service collection, document no. 21195374.

#### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- 1. The following video interviews were conducted by the University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education:
  - Rifka Fried, Interview Code 17635, Language: English, July 22, 1996.
  - Magda Herskovits, Interview Code 31593, Language: English, July 31, 1997.
  - Mike Herskovits, Interview Code 31596, Language: English, Yiddish, July 31, 1997.

#### Note:

In April 2017, I had coordinated with the University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education to have my grandparents' video testimonials available online on their web site for viewing.

- 2. The following photographs were donated by Safta in 2014, to the United States Holocaust Museum Photo Archives, following her meeting with Judith Cohen (Director, Photographic Reference Collection):
  - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives Reference
     #: 74494, 74495, 74496, 74497, 74498, 74499, 74500, 74539, 74540,
     74541, 74542, 74543, 74553, 74555 and 74729.

# A photo of my grandparents together, on the day of my Bar Mitzvah party, August 25, 1991:



Pictured from left to right: Rifka (Weiss) Fried (Safta), Moshe Herskowitz (Zaide), Magdalena (Berkovits) Herskowitz (Babi) and Israel Fried (Saba).